PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 74

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
25 FEBRUARY—8 MARCH 1985

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IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 74**

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 25 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Regional Transport

1. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements exist for formal budget consultations between the London boroughs and London Regional Transport.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): None, Sir. As with other nationalised industries, London Regional Transport's budget and external financing limit are matters for determination, in the course of the annual investment and financing review, between the Government and the industry.

Mr. Cohen: Has not the initial operation of LRT shown that there has been no consultation with the London boroughs before major decisions have been taken about fares, services and the level of rate, or, indeed, about the Secretary of State's level of subsidy to London's transport? Has not the Minister set up LRT as a completely undemocratic quango, immune from influence from the public or London's local authorities? Is it not a case for the ratepayers of taxation without representation?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman served on the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport Bill and he knows only too well that it is up to the Government to make the decisions for a nationalised industry and for debate to take place, as it did on the levy order, in the House. It was because the GLC deliberately used up to £200 million of the balances in the financial year 1984-85 in order to keep its precept down in 1984-85 that it has left the Government to take the rap for the LRT levy in 1985-86. The £200 million that it used up equates almost exactly with the £212 million which is the ratepayers' levy for 1985-86.

Mr. Tracey: Far from LRT being unrepresentative and undemocratic, does that not apply to the GLC, which is still precepting the same amount from the boroughs this year as last year although it now no longer has responsibility for London's transport?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon Friend is right. The GLC has nobody but itself to blame for its budgeting. It is responsible for the debts that it has built up and for using ratepayers' money in a way that local government never intended to use ratepayers' money. It should be made clear that by manipulating the finances of the ratepayers it is doing a disservice to Londoners everywhere.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister referred to London Regional Transport as a nationalised industry. Is there any other example of a nationalised industry which, through its appropriate Minister, levies local government on a rate precept?

Mrs. Chalker: None of the other nationalised industries were set up in the way that LRT has been set up. Because of that, the London Regional Transport Act required LRT to make available comprehensive information, to consult upon and publish a three-year statement of strategy, to publish an annual business plan, an annual report and accounts, and, indeed, to inform local authorities and the London regional passengers committee each year on what it is doing. That consultation goes far further than of any other nationalised industry.

Mr. Adley: Nevertheless, is my hon. Friend aware that the liberalisation of coach services in London has caused LRT a problem on the timekeeping of its buses in central London? If she cannot and will not consult the GLC, for

reasons that we all understand, will any machinery be set up whereby LRT's transport problems can be discussed with the Government?

Mrs. Chalker: It will interest my hon. Friend to know that the GLC has been present at the meetings that I have held with the London Boroughs Association about the way in which coach parking in London can interfere with the passage of buses through London, and we shall continue to discuss that matter together.

Transport Policy Functions

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has conducted since June 1983 into the optimum allocation of transport policy functions between the different tiers of local government in England.

Mrs. Chalker: In the months leading up to the publication of "Streamlining the Cities", and during the subsequent period of consultation, considerable time was given to the allocation of transport functions in the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Bennett: Which professional or academic bodies came out in favour of those proposals? How far can those proposals guarantee to my constituents in Stockport and Tameside that buses will run more frequently, and on time, and that fares will be cheaper?

Mrs. Chalker: Where districts are talking to the regional offices of my Department, it is possible to make progress on detailed matters such as the running of buses. The districts that refuse to talk to the Government, as so many are doing, do nothing but harm to the passengers in their areas. The Association of County Surveyors has asked for more information. Seeing that the Bill was going through, it has made helpful suggestions on ways in which matters may be arranged for the highway authorities to take over their responsibilities on abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Marlow: In transport, as elsewhere in local government, should not local authorities be restricted increasingly to the control and oversight of policy rather than the provision of services, particularly as it is patently obvious that in many areas of local activity the local authority is unable to provide a fair balance between the demands of the public sector unions and the needs of the public.

Mrs. Chalker: I have much sympathy with what my hon. Friend said. As he knows, the subsidy for public transport rose from £10 million in 1972 to £520 million in 1982. We are not against subsidy, but we favour it only where it is a sensible use of money. Local authorities have muddled up the running of a transport service with their use of ratepayers' money.

National Bus Company

3. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive proposals from the National Bus Company for the restructuring of that company.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I expect to begin discussions with the NBC about restructuring and associated matters soon.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend favour proposals that will encourage share owning by employees, so that as many as possible may participate in the fruits of deregulation and in their own companies, bearing in mind that if we split up the NBC there could be 50 or 60 companies?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be most desirable for employees of the subsidiaries of the NBC to be able to buy their companies through an employee buy-out or to participate in share schemes if they do not wish to take part in a buyout. The Bill includes a provision to that effect.

We shall be asking the NBC to provide options, which will include a large number of subsidiary companies, though a final decision will not be taken until we see what options are put forward.

Mr. Stephen Ross: My question has already been put, but I will ask the Secretary of State——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman would rather not ask a question, I shall call someone else.

Mr. Ross: As I am on my feet, may I ask the Secretary of State to give an assurance that priority will be given to management buy-outs if the privatisation scheme has to go through? I do not believe that it will go through, because I do not think that there will be as many buyers for the companies as the right hon. Gentleman expects.

Mr. Ridley: I look forward to having the hon. Gentleman in our Lobby on that point, if on no other, when we reach that clause in the Bill. When I was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, I was happy to seek provisions in a Finance Bill to help employees borrow money with tax relief for that very purpose. I hope that those provisions will be helpful in this case.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Maidstone in my constituency we run a successful local authority bus undertaking? When he considers the restructing of the NBC, will he work out why it is proposed that the Maidstone undertaking should have to declare itself a company long before the NBC locally has to do anything of the kind?

Mr. Ridley: I know the point that my hon. Friend is making, but it is not quite like that. The National Bus Company will have to be organised into separate arm's length subsidiaries at the same time as the municipal operators, such as Maidstone, do exactly the same thing. The question of ownership involves a separate and later stage. Although we seek to privatise the National Bus Company subsidiaries, we are not seeking to privatise the municipal undertakings. Thus, I think that my hon. Friend will agree that there is nothing unfair about the timing, as the different sorts of company will have to be at arm's length.

Mrs. Dunwoody: What criteria will the Secretary of State use in judging the viable size of the companies into which he wants the NBC to be broken down? What effect will it have on the municipal bus companies if the National Bus Company can run over certain routes because there is no protection? Why cannot the right hon. Gentleman accept that various stockbroker firms have given evidence to the NBC that there is a viable number of companies which is much larger than the 40 or 50 companies that he seems to demand?

Mr. Ridley: Competition will depend on what plans are put forward by the NBC in relation to the letter that I wrote it—which the hon. Lady has no doubt read, and knows intimately—in which I said that the first priority must be to consider how the bus industry can be made competitive. I am surprised that the hon. Lady, of all people, should proxy stockbrokers in aid of her argument. It is highly desirable to make competition the first requirement and to ensure that that competion is fair as between the private sector, the NBC subsidiaries, the municipals and the passenger transport executives.

British Rail (Privatisation)

4. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to privatise any part of the British Rail network.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Marshall: As the basis of paying transport supplementary support grant has now been changed, how does the Minister intend to finance uneconomic rural rail services?

Mr. Mitchell: The normal system for uneconomic rural rail services continues with a PSO grant. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the PTE areas, I must tell him that it is for the PTEs to decide their priorities within their own areas.

Mr. Maude: Is my hon. Friend aware that many people believe that it is only when British Rail is subjected to the full discipline of the private sector that the deep-seated problems of overmanning will be dealt with?

Mr. Mitchell: We have set BR very tough requirements in its objectives. It is for it to decide on the most effective way of pursuing them.

Mr. Flannery: If the Minister should ever think of privatising any section of BR, will he bear in mind that there was a time when the bus and rail services were subject to the "full discipline of the private sector"? They failed the British people to such an extent that it became necessary long before the war to municipalise the buses, and absolutely essential to nationalise the train network, as it just was not functioning properly.

Mr. Mitchell: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is living in the past. A considerable number of private bus operators are in existence, and have been for many years.

Mr. Flannery: I was talking about the past, not living in it.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware of the two sets of proposals to privatise the branch line from Slough to Windsor, and of BR's rather discouraging reply? Will he urge BR, in his most persuasive manner, to look seriously at those proposals to turn a loss-making branch line into a profitable private undertaking?

Mr. Mitchell: Having set British Rail very tough objectives, including a reduction of about £200 million in the amount of subsidy that it receives from the taxpayer, it must be for it to decide the most effective way of pursuing them. If it feels that it can achieve its objectives more effectively in the way that my hon. Friend has outlined, we shall certainly not discourage it from doing so.

Mr. Harris: If my hon. Friend will not consider privatising the network, will he at least acknowledge that one section of British Rail, the catering services, is positively crying out for privatisation?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail has recently drawn up criteria for competitive tendering for services. I do not doubt that many in the private sector will seek to tender for catering and other services against those criteria.

Fare Stage Bus Services

5. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport which cities he has taken as models for the style and extent of public service for fare stage bus services he expects to emerge upon enactment of the Transport Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): Our proposals for the bus industry are based on a wide body of evidence from throughout the economy that the customer gets the best deal in a competitive market. This is certainly so in the city of Hereford.

Mr. Adley: I presume that there is no major city in the world that my hon. Friend can quote me as an example of where that policy may work. Having voted reluctantly for the Second Reading of the Bill, may I ask my hon. Friend whether he is aware that we need evidence that the Government's proposals can and will work? Otherwise, there is a danger that, if the outcome does not match the intention, some of our cities will become public transport deserts, as Los Angeles has done.

Mr. Spicer: We make no claims that these are not new and radical policies, but the present policies of protectionism, supported by more and more taxpayers' money, have failed. In 10 years the number of passengers on buses has fallen by 30 per cent., while in real terms the taxpayers' money spent on revenue support has increased thirteenfold. All the evidence from Hereford, from Guildford and from the express services points to the fact that our policies will give the industry and the travelling public much new hope.

Mr. Cartwright: The evidence from Hereford may give some indication of what deregulation may mean in the rural areas, but how can the hon. Gentleman claim that that provides any evidence about what deregulation may mean in the urban centres, which depend upon integrated bus services?

Mr. Spicer: Hereford and Guildford are cities, and there have been extensive studies in Guildford showing that there will be considerable savings to the taxpayer if our proposals are introduced there.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that the officers of Hereford city council were extremely worried by the environmental damage and that it was considered that 25 years of progress had been wiped out by that one short, chaotic experiment? The Minister cannot tell us of any major city in the world which operates such chaotic ideas. If it is such a marvellous scheme, why does he not intend to introduce it in London?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Lady forgot one element in Hereford—the passengers. All the evidence in Hereford is that they are very satisfied with the experiment there.

Metropolitan Counties (Rail Services)

6. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the contribution of local rail services to the effectiveness of the transport system in the metropolitan county areas of England.

Mr. David Mitchell: Such assessments are the responsibility of the passenger transport executive of each metropolitan county.

Mr. Wareing: I do not think that anyone will be satisfied with that answer. Will the Minister now explain what guarantees he can give to rail commuters in metropolitan areas that their services will continue after 1986? Is he prepared to give such guarantees in amendments to the Transport Bill, which is now under consideration?

Mr. Mitchell: As for guarantees to rail commuters, the decision about the priorities of locally elected people for services in their local areas is for them to take and not for the Government to dictate.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that in many metropolitan counties, including my own county of West Yorkshire, considerable progress has been made towards the integration of bus and rail services? How on earth can that integration survive once deregulation takes place, as it will undermine the whole principle?

Mr. Mitchell: If the integrated services are along corridors on which people want to travel, they will be able to compete successfully against other forms of transport. On the other hand, if people are being made to fit a planner's blueprint, there will be trouble for them.

Mr. Adley: How will the Transport Bill affect the Tyne and Wear metro service?

Mr. Mitchell: The Tyne and Wear metro service will be able to retain not only its existing service but the feeder services to it. I judge that with that arrangement it will be able to compete very successfully.

Mr. Snape: Now that the hon. Gentleman has replied to the question from his hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) about the Tyne and Wear metro, will he tell the House the difference between the feeder service to that metro and feeder services to other PTE operated railway services around our major conurbations? Will he further tell us what is the similarity between those conurbations and their transport problems and the cities of Hereford and Guildford?

Mr. Mitchell: Feeder services—whether they are in PTE areas or anywhere else—will depend for their success on the number of people who want to use them. That is the criterion against which any business success should be judged.

Local Government Reform

8. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect he expects abolition of the metropolitan counties to have on the use of section 20 grants.

Mr. David Mitchell: Abolition of the metropolitan county councils should not have any effect on support for local rail passenger services under section 20.

Mr. Stott: I am as satisfied with that answer as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) was with his. Is the Minister aware that the current Molotov cocktail that the Government have been mixing in respect of the TSG reshaping, the abolition of the metropolitan counties, rate capping and bus deregulation must at least pose some element of uncertainty regarding the continuation of section 20 grants?

Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that, under the legislation we are discussing in Committee, the PTEs will have to be broken down into smaller Companies Act company units? How can those companies sustain the level of money required to keep those rail services in operation at the present time? If the Bill goes through without substantial amendment, will not many of the section 20 lines currently operating in our large cities have to close?

Mr. Mitchell: I am very sorry that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the Bill being discussed in Committee. When he looks at it in more detail, and when we come to discuss the relevant clauses, he will discover that the broken down companies of the PTEs are not responsible for providing subsidy under section 20. That will remain a matter for the PTA and the whole PTE, not the bus operations.

Departmental Expenditure

9. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on *(a)* trunk road and *(b)* motorway (i) building and (ii) maintenance since June 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: From June 1979 to 1 February 1985, £1,290 million has been spent on construction and improvement of trunk roads and £1,480 million on motorways. The corresponding figures for maintenance are £370 million and £530 million.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. Does she agree that the Government have spent far more on maintenance and construction than have any previous Government? Is that not good for all motorists and lorry drivers?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right to say that we have been reversing the shortsighted cuts of the previous Labour Administration. Capital spending on roads is now 123 per cent. higher in cash terms and 30 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79. The return on investment will be £1·70 for every pound spent during this and the next three years. There are no cuts in the programme resulting from last year's public spending review. That shows the Government's commitment to the programme, including both building and maintenance.

Mr. Higgins: While those figures are good, is my hon. Friend aware that they do not include expenditure on a Worthing bypass? Is she aware that the case for a bypass was accepted some time ago, but that the route originally suggested went through the centre of the town? When is Worthing likely to have a proper bypass?

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend is only too well aware of the very difficult position that affects his town,

which is surrounded by a very pleasant rural area and has a fairly busy and dense route through the centre. He also knows that we are considering the matter most carefully and will come back to him as soon as we possibly can.

Mr. Yeo: Is my hon. Friend aware that because of the success of Felixstowe and the growth of the East Anglian economy, the A12 in Suffolk is now carrying as many heavy vehicles as the A2 in east Kent, but certainly does not receive the same level of investment?

Mrs. Chalker: With the building of the Orwell bridge and the bypasses in the area, East Anglia has not suffered from a lack of investment in recent years. There are problems as ports develop faster than might have been predicted. We are looking carefully at the entire road network in East Anglia, and the hon. Gentleman will be aware that that is being done on the basis of the new traffic figures published in December.

Sir Reginald Eyre: Is the Minister aware of the severe congestion affecting the M6 motorway where it passes through the Birmingham and west midlands conurbation? Is she further aware of the urgent need for an orbital route to relieve this overburdened stretch of motorway, and can she give encouraging news of action in that respect?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend shares with me concern about the amount of traffic on the M6 in that area of Birmingham. The road can carry a substantial amount of traffic, but it has become necessary to consult the local councils and others about the possibility of another road. I shall be meeting my right hon. and hon. Friends shortly to discuss the matter in further detail.

Transport Bill

10. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what benefits to the consumer he expects from immediate implementation of the Transport Bill.

Mr. Ridley: Implementation puts the customers first and brings a better standard of service, lower fares on many routes and the prospect of ending a 30-year decline of bus services. The main provisions of the Bill will be implemented during the course of 1986.

Mr. Dixon: Is not the opposite of what the right hon. Gentleman has said in fact the truth—that not only will it eliminate early morning, evening, weekend and rural services, but will put in jeopardy the Tyne and Wear integrated system and threaten pensioners' concessionary passes?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. It will do none of the things that he alleges. It will, indeed, improve rural services and allow concessionary fares and other such concessions to continue. If the Tyne and Wear metro is as good as he and many others think—myself included—I do not see what the threat to it can be. The hon. Gentleman may not know that I have asked my officials to consider with the local authority associations whether the GRE formula can take account of the extra revenue support costs of the metro. That is already the case, as he may know, with BR services under section 20. We are prepared to look at the problem, but I do not believe that it would be right to deny customers the freedom to go how and where they like just because a metro is in existence.

Mr. Sayeed: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Avon the bus subsidy has increased from £66,000 to over £4½ million in 10 years, representing a real increase of 2,100 per cent., while services have declined? As exhortation has failed in the past, is it not now time for legislation?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. I visited Avon last Friday and discussed the matter with representatives of Avon county council and others in the area. It appears to be breaking on party lines, with the Labour-controlled councils, with their usual reason of resistance to change and new thinking, now being the main opponents of the Bill.

Mr. Pike: As the Bill states that, when inviting tenders it is not possible to lay down conditions of employment, is it the intention of the Secretary of State that the main benefits to consumers shall be achieved on the backs of the workers in the industry by way of poor working conditions and low pay?

Mr. Ridley: Not a bit. The local authority associations asked, and we were happy to agree, that there should be greater flexibility in the rules of tendering, and that is allowed for in the Bill. The hon. Gentleman may know that the Midland Red Bus Company in Hereford and Worcester achieved a 25 per cent. increase in productivity without any of the scare stories that he is now peddling.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have been besieged with protests from ratepayers in my area at receiving through their letter boxes—every ratepayer in Lancashire has received one—a copy of this expensive looking glossy leaflet which I hold in my hand, which tries to mislead the public about the situation applying to buses? Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of my rural constituents are looking forward eagerly to the day when we get more frequent and more flexible bus services and when we do not have 72-seater buses running round country areas, each carrying only one or two people?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely share my hon. Friend's views. If the money that has been spent on publicity by some county councils had been spent on improving rural services, we might have a very much better system of services.

Mr. Hoyle: In view of the considerable volume of correspondence that the Secretary of State has received from those protesting about the Bill, will he drop it? Is it not true that it will provide a worse deal for the consumer? Many consumers will have no bus services and there is a risk to safety because of the pirates that the right hon. Gentleman will put on the road.

Mr. Ridley: I never understand why the Labour party is incapable of thinking that anything new can be done. It is unable to contemplate actions that are taken on behalf of customers. Is it dominated totally by interest groups and the unions?

Mrs. Dunwoody: If the Bill is so marvellous, why has the Women's Institute produced a number of surveys showing that over 40 per cent. of women in rural areas have no access to cars during the day, and in many instances do not have cars available to them at the times that would be most useful to them? As we know from the Hereford experience that many rural areas will not have

any services, why does the right hon. Gentleman think that communities are protesting if they can see that the Bill will be of benefit to the consumer?

Mr. Ridley: It is because so many people in rural areas, especially women, are dependent upon bus services that we seek to improve rural bus services. Perhaps the hon. Lady will take on board the representations of consumers. The National Consumer Protection Council has welcomed the provisions in the Bill. It believes that they will lead to better rural services, as in Hereford.

Buses

11. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations on the White Paper, "Buses", he has received from taxi drivers and taxi associations; and what were the main points made.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have received over 300 representations from individual taxi drivers and their associations. About two-thirds of these took the form of circular letters. Ministers have also met many delegations from the trade. The taxi trade generally accepts the opportunity for new types of business contained in the Bill but is principally concerned that the quantity of taxi vehicle licences may be increased.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents who are taxi drivers are concerned that the value of their investment in a licence will be dramatically reduced if there is no provision in the Transport Bill for a transitional period? Has my hon. Friend any words of comfort for them?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has taken a close and continuous interest in this matter on behalf of his constituents. We believe that the taxi trade generally accepts that something is wrong with a licensing system where it is necessary to pay large sums to enter the trade. Licence holders already stand to lose the plate value of their licence because district councils may refuse to renew them or because a council may issue more licences.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister recognise that, besides being bothered about its future, the taxi trade is extremely bothered about the prospect of all sorts of crooked outfits, some of them financied by experience gained in Hong Kong, moving into the British market, ripping off the public and providing a very poor standard of service? Their financial probity is, to say the least, in doubt.

Mr. Spicer: One of the worries is quantity licensing. After many representations from the industry, to which we have listened carefully, we have set out in the Bill that district councils can withold the granting of licences if they are satisfied that to issue more licences would have an adverse effect on the general availability of taxi services.

St. Pancras–Sheffield Line

12. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is currently considering any proposal for investment by British Rail on the St. Pancras to Sheffield line.

Mr. David Mitchell: Inter-city HST services, running at speeds up to 100 mph, were introduced in 1982-83 between Sheffield and St. Pancras. There are no further investment proposals for this line awaiting our approval.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister appreciate that the big cities along that line — Derby, Nottingham, and specially Sheffield—feel that they are being demeaned and demoted and that the line is being run down? As a regular user of the line, may I ask him to accept from me that what he has just said is not the proper answer? Individual trains are faster, but there are far fewer of them and fewer carriages per train, with the result that over the day the service is much worse than it was before. Will the Minister talk to the councils, which have repeatedly met to discuss this because they believe that the line is about to disappear due to lack of investment?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman claims that the line has been demeaned and demoted. Having introduced 100 mph high-speed trains and improved the journey time from Sheffield to St. Pancras by 20 minutes, and having achieved an improvement of 15 to 20 per cent. in the number of passengers using it, I can only say that many other services would like to be demeaned and demoted in the same way.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

41. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General when he will respond to the 34th annual report of the Lord Chancellor's legal aid advisory committee.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The report was published on 28 January. The Lord Chancellor wishes to consider carefully the committee's recommendations before taking any decisions on them.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that it is urgent to act on the recommendation of the advisory committee about the threat to the future of law centres and citizens advice bureaux consequent on the possible abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan councils and on possible uncertainties in urban programme funding? Will he take urgent action to give law centres and CABs security for the future?

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has formulated proposals for transitional and supplemental financial support for voluntary bodies, which would include the law centres, as a basis for further consultations with those concerned. It is, of course, right that there should be a viable and sensible basis for funding the law centres, but this must be got right and there are conflicting interests.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider whether there is not a good case for a contingency legal aid system, as at present recourse to the law seems to be available only to the very poor and the very rich?

The Solicitor-General: I do not wholly accept the terms in which my hon. Friend has framed his question, but there is certainly room for improvement. He will recall that my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor introduced a regulation, which took effect in March last year, to raise the thresholds for legal aid, thus meeting a need. I will, however, pass on my hon. Friend's comments to my right hon. and noble Friend.

Mr. John Morris: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree there is a great need, not for transitional arrangements, but for certainty of funding for the law

centres? Only a year ago, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), we were told that the matter was receiving urgent consideration. Given the rundown of urban funding, is there not a dispute between the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Department of the Environment about the future of the law centres? How does the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconcile the Government's support for citizens advice bureaux nationally with the fact that they do not do so locally? With the additional danger of rate capping, will there not be a considerable diminution of advice for hundreds of thousands of people?

The Solicitor-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to an answer given "only a year ago", which puts the matter in context. The demands made on legal aid and advice services, including law centres, tend to vary between localities. It is not easy to resolve the conflicting interests, but local circumstances are best identified at local level. The Government therefore see advantage in local diversity in funding arrangements, but this and other matters are kept under review.

Coal Industry Dispute

42. **Mr. Adley** asked the Attorney-General if he will update the statistics on cases outstanding in the courts in relation to offences alleged to have been committed in relation to the miners' strike, which he gave to the hon. Member for Christchurch on 4 February, *Official Report*, column *606*.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): During the period from 13 March 1984 to 19 February 1985, 7,785 persons were charged with a total of 10,153 offences alleged to have been committed during the course of the current miners' dispute. Of these, 5,329 defendants have been dealt with and the cases of 2,456 remain to be heard.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Now that the strike looks as though it is crumbling—or, indeed, has crumbled—and in so far as it is within his power, will he do all that he can to see that a differentiation is made between the tiny minority of miners and their politically motivated leaders who have been involved in much of this violence, and the overwhelming majority of miners who, I am sure, have found it as distasteful as the rest of us? On that point, has he anything to say to the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) in reply to the point that the right hon. Gentleman has made in the last few weeks?

The Attorney-General: The figures speak for themselves. A total of 7,500 over nearly 12 months indicates a great deal of restraint from the police.

Mr. Mason: Will the Attorney-General now update the figures relating to all those miners who have been charged and since been acquitted? Will he, in league with the Home Secretary, now publicly advise the chief constables to call in those miners so that they see their fingerprints and photographic records destroyed, thereby giving them a chance of continuing work with the NCB without embarrassment or difficulty?

The Attorney-General: I have absolutely no control in any way over chief constables. This is a matter for the Home Secretary, and I shall ensure that the right hon. Gentleman's remarks are drawn to his attention.

Mr. Mason: What about the numbers acquitted?

Mr. Hardy: The Attorney-General did not give the figure for the number of cases dismissed. Given that a large percentage of the charges have been dismissed, will he request that a review of outstanding charges be conducted so that the time of the courts is not wasted?

The Attorney-General: The number acquitted is 1,306 up to the end of last week—much less than 75 per cent. —but I shall bear in mind what has been said.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Has not the number of charges withdrawn been increasing in recent months, and does not a problem therefore arise in as much as the NCB has been dismissing people in that category? What consultations has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had on that aspect of his figures?

The Attorney-General: It would not be for me to consult. Practically all those cases would be cases that were not drawn to the attention of the DPP at all.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I welcome the fact that so many miners have been dealt with successfully, and the speed with which this has been done. Will my right hon. and learned Friend in some way arrange for publicity to be given to the large number of offences that have been committed so that it will act as a deterrent to other miners intent on following the same course?

The Attorney-General: The variety of charges is enormous, as is the variety of those who have been charged. The bulk are miners, but also included are students, lecturers, manual workers and the unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Following——

Mr. Mason: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Attorney-General's reply, I give notice that I shall raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Brown: Following the answer that the Attorney-General gave my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), when this matter was raised on 4 February——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) has, by his action, prevented any further questions arising on this matter and, therefore, I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to continue his question.

Mr. John Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central has gazumped the Opposition Front Bench.

Legal Aid

43. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Attorney-General what information Her Majesty's Government gather about the level of charges made by solicitors in the context of monitoring public expenditure on legal aid.

The Solicitor-General: The average cost of solicitors' bills for legal aid work is monitored on a monthly basis.

Mr. Cox: Is the Solicitor-General aware that many people find it extremely difficult to obtain legal aid? Is it because of the cost? Is he further aware that in the London area the going rate for legal advice on immigration matters from solicitors is around £75 an hour? Against that

background, will he inquire into, and publish a report on, the charges that solicitors present to their clients, which are often outrageously high?

The Solicitor-General: I shall ensure that the Lord Chancellor considers the hon. Gentleman's point. The part of the legal aid scheme for which the Law Society is responsible is monitored. Results of cases, charges and fees paid are fed into the Law Society's computer, and referred to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Statistics derived from that information are already published in the annual legal aid reports. There are other monitoring exercises carried out for the Crown and county courts.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

44. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of total United Kingdom Government aid to Ethiopia since 1982; and how much of that has been since 1 October 1984.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): Our aid to Ethiopia since 1982 amounts to about £52 million. That includes actual and estimated expenditure and recent commitments which, since 1 October 1984, total about £26·6 million. The figures include our share of European Community aid.

Mr. Chapman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the United Kingdom Government have probably given more aid than any other Government to that unfortunate country, and in particular that they started giving aid before the media reported the extent of the famine? Will he assure the House that sufficient food is available for the needs of the people in Ethiopia, at least for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Raison: It is difficult to draw precise comparisons between different countries, but our record is good. Regarding my hon. Friend's final and important point, Mr. Jansson, the United Nations' co-ordinator, told me on 12 February that shipments are sufficient until the end of May. A further 600,000 tonnes pledged for delivery after that should meet most needs until the end of the year. Clearly, we need to keep in close touch.

Mr. Alton: Has the Minister seen the telex from the Tigré Relief Society, which suggests that 3·8 million people are at risk in that northern province of Ethiopia and that 1,500 people have died there? Will he assure the House that additional aid will be sent there? Is he aware that 750,000 people have signed the Oxfam petition asking for additional aid to sub-Saharan Africa?

Mr. Raison: I am aware that many people are rightly worried about sub-Saharan Africa. There is no doubt that the position in Tigré and Eritrea is difficult, largely because of the civil war and the drought. Substantial food aid is coming from the Ethiopian side. The best way to try to help meet the problem is to work through international and voluntary agencies.

Sir Frederic Bennett: To put into proper perspective the generosity of aid from this and other Western countries, will my right hon. Friend arrange to place in the Library such details as he has available of aid from all sources to Ethiopia, especially those from the Soviet Union, within whose empire Ethiopia presently rests, and whose aid, so far as one's own research shows, seems to be limited to arms and ammunitions to allow the present Government there to continue repressing the people?

Mr. Raison: A later question on the Order Paper will provide some of the facts for which my right hon. Friend asks. It is notoriously difficult to discover the figures for Soviet bloc aid. I have no doubt that in so far as they exist, they show that the record of the Soviet Union is greatly inferior to that of western countries.

Mr. Barnett: The Minister said that he was anxious to work, as far as possible, with and through international agencies. Can he tell the House why he continues to refuse to co-operate fully in contributing to the special fund for sub-saharan Africa?

Mr. Raison: That is a little outside the scope of the question. The fact is that we have offered to make available for exactly the purposes of that special fund £15 million a year for five years. I believe that that will prove to be a valuable contribution towards the objectives that the special facilities seek to achieve.

Sudan

45. **Mr. Mark Robinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Sudan.

Mr. Raison: My visit enabled me to see the relief programmes being mounted for the Sudanese famine victims and for the very large numbers of refugees who have entered Sudan. Very substantial food supplies are now beginning to build up. I have decided to allocate a further 30,000 tonnes of bilateral food aid now so that this can arrive before the June rains. In addition, I am making a further £1 million available to be divided between Oxfam and Save the Children Fund.

During my visit I was also able to have discussions with President Nimeiri, as well as visiting development projects being financed from British and European Community aid.

Mr. Robinson: I am sure that all hon. Members will welcome the speed of my right hon. Friend's response following his visit to the Sudan. The problem in that country is not so much the supply of relief but the means of getting it to the places where it is needed. During his visit, did my right hon. Friend examine that aspect to see whether there was any way in which Britain could help with transport?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about my announcement. It is helpful to note that many lorries are available in the Sudan, but that does not mean that all the transport problems can be solved. Diesel and petrol are in especially short supply and the position must be watched carefully. We are providing help at the port and to the railway system.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that what is most important for the Sudan and the entire region is not simply energy aid, important though that is, but a guarantee of long-term development projects, especially for reafforestation, the prevention of soil erosion and the provision of adequate water supplies? Should not such projects be at the forefront of Government thinking?

Mr. Raison: I confirm that in the Sudan the problem is not just one of short-term famine relief. It is extremely

important that there should be long-term development. During my visit I examined projects financed by Britain and the EC covering exactly the activities to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Britain has a substantial development programme in the Sudan.

Sub-Sahara Africa

46. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his priority objectives for food aid and its distribution in the drought-affected countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: The relief of famine victims most in need in Africa is our priority. We shall provide bilaterally at least 110,000 tonnes of grain in 1985, of which 25,000 tonnes have already reached Ethiopia and Sudan. We meet the costs of internal distribution, and have financed improvements in handling capacities at the ports and inland.

Mr. Holland: While those sums sound impressive, and while we are glad that the Minister has been able to visit Sudan, he must realise that his earlier reply about Tigré is inadequate. It is not true to say that substantial food aid from Ethiopia is reaching Tigré. It is receiving less than 2,000 tonnes a month, when it needs 20,000 tonnes a month. The right hon. Gentleman told the House that Mr. Jansson of the United Nations is most concerned that food aid should go to those areas, but Mr. Jansson has stressed that food aid is not being adequately distributed. Further, in terms of the EC aid to which the Minister referred, when will he see the Commissioners and ensure that the aid is distributed rather than simply awaiting distribution?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. He has ignored the fact that substantial quantities of food go into Eritrea and Tigré from the Ethiopian side. I fully accept that not all needs in the rebel-held areas are met from that source, which is why we stress the importance of other sources being created. I hope soon to visit the newly appointed Commissioner at the EC who is responsible for development activities.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the United Nations Organisation should have the same priorities as this country? Is it not a scandal that it is spending millions of pounds financing a conference centre when the money could be better spent on food aid or agricultural development?

Mr. Raison: I agree that that venture is entirely uncalled for now, and we have opposed it. However, I do not argue that all the activities of those who work for the United Nations in this area are abortive. I have seen good work carried out by several agencies and by Mr. Jansson, the co-ordinator in Addis Ababa.

47. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision is made in the aid budget for contingencies such as the famine in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: The bulk of the aid programme is focused on longer-term development, but an element is held back at the beginning of each financial year — some £45 million in 1984-85—to enable us to respond to urgent new requirements, including emergency relief, arising within the year.

Mr. Deakins: Do we not need an increase in the overall aid budget in total? Will the Minister press this on his skinflint colleagues in the Treasury so that unexpected needs, which are likely to loom larger and larger as the years go by—not merely in Africa but in other parts of the world—can be met without cutting back on other essential parts of our development budget?

Mr. Raison: The Government are committed to the control of public expenditure, but within our aid programme we set aside substantial sums of money to meet famines and disasters such as those that we have been seeing, and we shall continue to do so.

Dr. Mawhinney: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents are most appreciative of the generosity of the Government and of the leadership that he has shown in this matter, but that they would also want him to be aware of their hope that, in the face of this unprecedented crisis, an arbitrary restriction on the aid budget will not be allowed to stand in the way of humanitarian relief?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said about our contribution. As to our aid budget and the humanitarian considerations, it is obviously essential, as I have already stressed, to make sure that within that budget there is proper provision for emergencies. That is what we have done, and that is what we intend to continue doing.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister confirm that he and his Department expect that the horrific experience of Ethiopia and the Sudan in recent months is likely to be repeated, perhaps more intensely, in the years ahead? Will he guarantee that there will be even more attention to prevention rather than to the necessary relief?

Mr. Raison: It is always important to stress the vital importance of long-term prevention and the development programme. I have given figures for relief. Our total aid expenditure in Africa last year was about £225 million. In other words, we have a substantial development programme and a great deal of that is directed towards building up the agriculture of that continent.

Interception of Communications

3.31 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the allegations published yesterday in *The Observer* newspaper about illegal and political acts by MI5 relating to telephone tapping and other activities".

The matter is specific, in that a named person has made precise and detailed allegations. It is important, because at stake is the fundamental right of citizens to conduct legitimate activities free of oppressive interference by the state. It should have urgent consideration, because such charges have been current for several days without any specific response or denial by the Home Secretary.

The charges are made by Miss Cathy Massiter, who was employed in MI5 for 14 years, and who has been ready to risk prosecution under the Official Secrets Act as a result of speaking out openly. Miss Massiter alleges that MI5 has falsely classified hundreds of members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as subversives so as to justify opening files on them. She says that MI5 deliberately chose as a subject for telephone tapping a leading member of CND who was a Communist so as to justify this interception on the ground that a Communist could reasonably be classified as a subversive.

Miss Massiter further alleges that the Home Secretary in August 1983 signed a warrant authorising that this man's telephone be tapped, even though the Home Secretary himself has insisted that the test of subversion is a strict one, involving an intention to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy. This authorisation enabled MI5 to listen in to conversations with other leading members of CND.

Miss Massiter further alleges that secret information obtained by covert and clandestine methods was passed to the DS19 unit at the Ministry of Defence and a briefing paper was specifically prepared by MI5 for the Secretary of State for Defence and that this material was then used for party political purposes by the Secretary of State for Defence, even though the Maxwell Fyfe directive says:

"the Security Service should be kept absolutely free from any political bias or influence".

In the past few days, the Home Secretary has repeated that point.

Miss Massiter again says that the housing organisation, Shelter, has been spied upon on the ground that it might be a target of Communist penetration.

These allegations are of the utmost importance for freedom in a democratic society. If they are true, it means that the security services are being wrongly used by the Government in pursuit of party political objectives.

Some of these matters could have been put before the nation for consideration had it not been for the craven and sycophantic attitude of the Independent Broadcasting Authority in banning the programme, "MI5's Official Secrets". But it is particularly urgent that we in the House debate these allegations because, for all we know, these oppressive and instrusive activities are still going on now, possibly with new targets being spied upon and listened to.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As they were under the right hon. Gentleman's Government.

Mr. Kaufman: All who care about liberty and democracy — that clearly excludes a considerable number of Conservative Members of Parliament—and all who are opposed to the Big Brother or Big Sister state want these allegations to be cleared up, one way or the other. The House is the proper place for the Government to be questioned and to be held to account, so a debate is needed. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the allegations published yesterday in *The Observer* newspaper about illegal and political acts by MI5 relating to telephone tapping and other activities."

The right hon. Gentleman knows, as does the whole House, that the only decision that I have to make is whether to give this matter precedence over the business already set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Obviously I am in no way challenging your decision—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down, then."—That is your decision, and we must respect it.

If it was decided that there should be a prosecution under the Official Secrets Act, am I right in the view that it would be impossible for the matter to be raised on the Floor of the House because it would be sub judice?

We are told that the matter is being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. There is widespread concern in the country, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has properly said, and there is a great deal of discussion going on about it. However, at the end of the day we are unable to raise the matter with the relevant Minister.

During business questions last Thursday, you will recall that I attempted to raise the matter, as did one or two of my hon. Friends, and all that the Leader of the House said, understandably, was that he would refer it to the appropriate Minister. Today, Monday, there is to be no statement. There is no other way of raising the matter. If it was decided that the employee who exposed the malpractices in MI5 should be prosecuted, which in my view would be outrageous, we should not be able to raise the matter. It would be sub judice.

As I see it, a very important part of our job in the House in safeguarding democratic liberties is being eroded because we are unable to raise the issue by means of an emergency debate, a statement or in other ways that I cannot mention here. Therefore, we are denied the opportunity that we on the Opposition Benches want—I cannot speak for Government supporters—which is to play our role in defending people's democratic rights.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot rule on what is obviously a hypothetical case. It is an individual case, and I have no knowledge of whether there is to be any prosecution. However, the hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that if cases are sub judice they may not be raised here.

As for the general proposition, the House knows that there is shortly to be a debate on this subject.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Further to the application made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), since the vast majority of the allegations made in the film to which the right hon. Gentleman referred relate to the telephone tapping of trade union leaders at the time when a Labour Government were in office, would it not be more appropriate for such a debate to take place in Opposition time?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The concern of the Opposition is that all allegations should be considered. The point is that Ministers of the Crown, who are answerable to the House of Commons refuse even to come to the House to make a statement. When will the Leader of the House fulfil his undertaking that the House will be given a statement on these matters by the Home Secretary, so that all allegations, whomever they are against, can be considered by Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum)

Mr. Speaker: We come now to the debate on the rate limitation order.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order relates to the ability of this House to debate the order this afternoon. The week before last, the House debated a similar order in relation to four precepting authorities. Last week two of those precepting authorities, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority, commenced an action in the High Court challenging the reasonableness of the assumptions made by the Secretary of State in assessing the rate limit under the order. The action was heard last week by Mr. Justice Forbes on a preliminary point. He required the Secretary of State to produce certain information to the two authorities in question by five o'clock last Friday afternoon. He also announced that there would be a four-day hearing of the issue of reasonableness, commencing this Wednesday.

The issue that is raised in that court proceeding is the same issue as underlies today's order — whether the order as announced by the Secretary of State—this, of course, is the second occasion, because the first order was withdrawn and replaced last week—can be debated by this House when the assumptions behind the order, so far kept secret by the Secretary of State, may be found by the court to be unreasonable. You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that the test of reasonableness will no doubt be similar in the case of the first order as in the case of the second, the Secretary of State having announced that the same criteria have been used by him in his two assessments.

The reason that I seek your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the debate can go ahead this afternoon, has both a legal implication—that the matter is sub judice—and a practical implication. The sub judice implication is the same reason, I would assert, as prevented the Secretary of State's right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport from dealing some weeks ago with matters of this sort in the context of London Regional Transport.

The matter of practical importance is that, although under section 5 of the Rates Act 1984 a rate must, in the first instance, be set by 1 March, if in the case of any of the designated authorities no maximum has been prescribed, the Secretary of State can prescribe an interim rate pending the matter being resolved. If the debate goes ahead today there is a possibility—some hon. Members believe a probability—that the order may, in part or in whole, be held to be invalid, that the House will therefore have to go through this exercise again and that the process adopted by the precepting authorities and the 13 authorities affected by this order—in particular the authorities in London, of which there are nine—will be held to be invalid if they seek to set a rate on 7 March, the date that they have announced.

I ask for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the House can go ahead with a debate on these matters in the light of the overriding concern that is being dealt with by the courts, which relates to what is at the core of the order.

Mr. Speaker: I am obliged to the hon. Member for having given me notice that he was going to raise that point of order, because it has enabled me to look into it carefully. The only point in his submission on which I can

[Mr. Speaker]

rule relates to the sub judice convention. Today's debate can take place without inhibition because that convention does not apply when the House is debating legislation; that includes delegated legislation, which is what the order is. It is not a matter for me whether it is more appropriate to debate the order before or after other decisions have been reached elsewhere.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that I raised a similar problem with the Leader of the House. My borough is rate-capped and receives about £850,000 from the GLC for voluntary organisations for the disabled, and so on. Whether it will receive that sum is now in doubt because of legal action. The rate that is now being determined will be affected by that and that creates a problem.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order for me? I was hoping to call the hon. Gentleman so that he could make that point in the debate, which would be more appropriate.

Mr. Pavitt: The point of order relates to whether, in view of those circumstances, it would be more appropriate for the debate to be deferred until such a time as we have the answer that we are awaiting.

Secondly, several authorities are concerned and those hon. Members who represent those authorities will wish to speak during the debate. Is it your intention, Mr. Speaker, to operate the ten-minute rule after 7 pm today?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman listened to what I said to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). It is not my intention to operate the ten-minute rule today, because this is an order and can, if the House so wishes, run until 11.30 pm. Therefore, I would not be justified in doing so.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of your ruling, will you confirm that it is open to the House, on the laying of a further order by the Secretary of State at a later date, to revoke, vary or repeal the order before the House so that if the court found that the order had been laid unreasonably, under the Interpretation Act 1978 the Secretary of State could come back to the House with another order, however embarassing that might be for him?

Mr. Speaker: That is always possible.

3.46 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): I beg to move,

That the draft Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

Let me begin by expressing my sympathy and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends for the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in his illness. I know that he would have liked to be in his place today for a debate to which he attaches great importance. We hope that he will make a swift recovery and be back in the House soon.

There should be no doubt about what the debate is all about. It is about the authority of the House of Commons, about the authority of Parliament, in the face of obstruction by a tiny minority of mostly extreme Left-wing dominated local authorities determined to challenge the democratic process.

Last year Parliament put the Rates Act on the statute book and since then, at every opportunity, that small group of local authorities has made no secret of its intention to defy the will of Parliament.

The Labour party-inspired local government campaign unit has systematically, month by month, enforced a policy of non-compliance on its authorities. Because of that stupid boycott, councils have refused to operate the procedures of the Act even when that would be to their advantage. They have been threatening to break the law, either by failing to make a rate or going in for deficit budgeting. Instead of spending money sensibly for the benefit of their communities, they are squandering millions on extravagant propaganda campaigns intended to discredit the Government and the legislation of the House.

That coterie of Marxist-dominated authorities is just another example of what we have seen in the actions of the National Union of Mineworkers, the strikers who nearly brought Cammell Laird to its knees and the repeated disruption of the nation's railways.

That is the ugly face of the Labour party and it is to the eternal discredit of the Opposition Front Bench, who claim to represent the reasonable face of the Labour party, that they have lent their authority to the disreputable campaign of the town hall wreckers.

The House should be aware of the kind of authority that we are dealing with in the order. Let me take Hackney first. It claims to be the poorest borough in England. How does it go about helping its poor? By improving efficiency? By saving unnecessary costs? By urging its employees to work a bit harder? By making the best use of its resources? No. It does the precise opposite. Contrary to national agreements, it has cut the hours of its manual employees to 35 a week; it has increased its staff this year alone by 400; its direct labour organisation is losing £2·5 million this year; it owns about 3,500 empty houses. The House will not be surprised to learn that one of Hackney's Labour councillors has recently resigned, saying that he will not break the law to fight Government cuts.

How does Leicester react to the Government's proposals? It has found the money to make the city a nuclear-free zone. Perhaps it is good news that Leicester has provided a rent-free office and a free telephone to the striking miners, because the result has been that 95 per cent. of Leicestershire miners have been at work for months.

Leicester's manpower per thousand population is double the average for its class of authority. Leicester's rates have risen in three years almost five times as fast as the average for its class.

Islington is rather more internationalist in its approach. It flies people to Nigeria on the rates. It has even employed two people to stamp out Irish jokes, at a cost of £17,000. Unfortunately, the £31,000 scheme "Aerobics on the Rates" never got airborne. Islington's spending has grown in three years two and a half times as fast as the local government average and its rates have gone up three times as fast as those of authorities in its class.

Basildon's rates have risen five times faster than the class average; Greenwich's rates have gone up 113 per cent. in three years; Lewisham spends £55,000 for each child in residential care. At the same time, it has earmarked £5,000 for research into the history of the golliwog and its rates have gone up twice as fast as its class average.

If Sheffield's rates were no higher than those in comparable councils, Sheffield could save £11 million. If Sheffield's refuse collection were no more efficient than that of the average council of its class, it could save £1 million.

The ratepayers in such areas have had to pay for that extravagance and incompetence. The hundreds of responsible councils that spend and rate sensibly have faced tougher targets because of the extravagance of the few. That is why rate capping is needed.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Sheffield, but is he not aware that Mr. John Banham, the Controller of his Audit Commission, said that Sheffield provided outstanding value for money and that its increase in expenditure since 1978 is exactly the same as the national average? If Sheffield's services provide outstanding value for money, why is the city being rate capped?

Mr. Jenkin: Mr. Banham must be responsible for his own opinions, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the average number of manual employees for its class of council is 9·15 per thousand. Sheffield employs 14·3 per thousand, and if it merely came back to the average, it could save £2·8 million. Thus, it is an extravagant authority. If the hon. Gentleman has spoken to any business men in Sheffield, he will know precisely what they think about it.

Of course rate capping is needed, yet what do we find? These authorities now scream blue murder about the savings that they are being asked to make. Every council on the list has known its spending level since last July and its rate limit since last December. Every council has had the right to appeal against both, but not one of them has chosen to do so. So to extravagance and incompetence they add obstinacy.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is not the basic problem that certain local authorities have thrown aside the ground rules that have tied local government for so long? Instead of local government now providing an opportunity for local authorities to provide services to their local electorates, some of the more lunatic Left-wing authorities now look upon local government as purely an opportunity to provide a platform for Socialist propaganda at the expense of the public and the ratepayers.

Mr. Jenkin: Yes indeed, and my hon. Friend will know that that has aroused widespread concern throughout the country, and is one reason why we asked the Widdicombe committee to look into the whole question.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: We have had an argument about whether these councils would have appealed and whether they might have been worse off if they had done so. But the right of appeal on rate limits would, if successful, allow only an increase in the limit. Thus, the councils have had no fig leaf of an excuse this time. I cannot reduce the proposed rate limits, nor have I any power to impose conditions. Thus publicly the councils bellow defiance at the Government, although privately—as I pointed out in our earlier debate — they have made sure that large amounts of information have reached me one way or another. So to obstinacy they have added some hypocrisy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Secretary of State explain why Conservative-controlled Brent council did not avail itself of the right to appeal against the rate limit set by his Government?

Mr. Jenkin: The answer to that is that Brent has been a hung council, and has made it perfectly clear that it is prepared to accept the limit which has been set. The leader of Brent council will no doubt wish to explain his position when he moves his rate, but he has made it clear to me that that is why he had no wish to appeal.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If Brent has made that clear, why is it designated in the order? Why has it not agreed the order with the right hon. Gentleman as Portsmouth has done? Surely it is not up to the leader to decide. Even if there is a hung council, it is still up to the council to decide.

Mr. Jenkin: To accept the limit would require a vote of the council. I understand that the Liberals were reluctant to accept the view of the largest party — that of the Conservative majority—that it should be agreed to, so Brent is in the list.

Mr. Pavitt *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: I should like to explain the position that I found myself in over Haringey. Even at the very last minute I withdrew the original order and substituted a new one, because Haringey, only a week ago — late last Monday, over two months after its original limit was announced — gave me a letter from the district auditor showing that, instead of the anticipated surplus of £2 million on the general rate fund at 31 March 1985, there is likely to be a deficit of almost £5 million. Such a deficit must by law be rated for, together with the holdback effects, so I had to alter the limit.

There can be only two reasons why, after months of silence, Haringey came in at the very last minute. Either the council was so incompetent that it did not know that it was running a £5 million deficit, or it was determined, as was suggested by John Carvel in *The Guardian*, to reduce the whole rate-capping policy to tatters. In the case of Haringey, I am more inclined to believe the former, but is it not a measure of that council's woeful irresponsibility that it did not know that it was heading for a £5 million deficit this year, that it did not know its DLO was losing £2·5 million, and that it did not know it was overspending to the tune of further millions in other areas?

The ratepayers of Haringey now have to pay a bitter price for their council's folly. The 16·5 per cent. increase on this year's borough rate is due entirely to the failure of the Labour majority on that council to know that it was heading for a deficit, and the failure to take steps to put is right in time.

I offer a word of grim comfort to Haringey's ratepayers. Without rate capping, and based on the £148 million budget which was planned by the Labour majority, ratepayers in Haringey would have had a rate increase not of 16·5 per cent. but of over 50 per cent.—three times as big. Rate capping is now protecting them from that.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Although it may be of some comfort to my constituents to know what might have been, they are concerned with the grim and dismal prospect that is before them. Does my right hon. Friend mean that any local authority can budget for a certain figure and then, year in and year out, deliberately

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

operate at a deficit, thereby destroying the basis of rate capping, because in the following year my right hon. Friend is obliged in law to make up that deficit?

Mr. Jenkin: I understand my hon. Friend's point and I sympathise with him and his constituents, knowing the position into which the council has put them. I do not think that authorities should believe that by deliberately overspending they have a secure way of breaking the rate limits.

All authorities have a clear duty, under the General Rate Act 1967, to balance estimated income and expenditure, and I am in no doubt that an authority's auditor would be seriously concerned about any attempt to subvert the process of budgeting and financial control by deliberate overspending, and about the attitude to financial management that that would imply. I would expect the auditor to draw the build-up of any deficit to the attention of the authority concerned at the earliest possible stage, so that it could take urgent action to put matters right.

The House will know that, where the auditor believes that the build-up of a deficit has led to a loss or deficiency —for example, in relation to interest charges—and that results from wilful misconduct, the loss will be surchargeable on the councillors responsible. Disqualification from office would follow automatically if the amount concerned were over £2,000. Any councillor would be well advised to consider his position very carefully before embarking on such a course.

I should like to add one further point which may be of some comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Where authorities were selected for a second year of rate limitation, I would feel fully entitled, in considering the sort of spending reductions that they could reasonably be asked to make, to take into account any failure on their part to achieve reductions which had been asked for in their first year of limitation.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend thinking of giving new instructions to district auditors to cover the point that he has just mentioned? Some of us find it extraordinary that Haringey should have got into its present position. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wood Green and Hornsey (Sir H. Rossi) said, it is amazing that the council did not realise how heavily it was spending in certain areas. What on earth was the district auditor doing in not telling the council to watch its expenditure?

Mr. Jenkin: It is not for me to give instructions to the district auditors. The Audit Commission is an independent body, and it would be for the Audit Commission to decide its policy on such matters. I have stated what I believe to be the law and what I think should be the facts, and I hope that the councils concerned will take note.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Will the Secretary of State accept that Haringey would welcome an inquiry into its finances of the past 12 months, particularly bearing in mind that its statutory obligations have increased since the rate-making dates to which the Minister has referred? Not only have Haringey's statutory obligations increased; there has been an increase in other areas of its negotiated expenditure during the year. Haringey, like many other authorities, has had to face the problem that, for every additional pound it has to raise, it costs the ratepayers £2.70 because of the penalties which are imposed by the Secretary of State. Therefore, budgeting is no longer a precise art; it is entirely within the hands of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Jenkin: All I can say is that the great majority of authorities, including many inner-city authorities, have been perfectly well able to live within their budgets this year. It is entirely due to thoroughly slack administration by Haringey council that it has a £5 million deficit. Haringey has not asked for an inquiry. There is nothing to prevent Haringey from going to the Audit Commission and asking for an inquiry into its affairs under section 29 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. I commend that point to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson).

In my administration of the Rates Act I have done my best to be reasonable, as the law requires. I have kept my mind ajar. I have extended the timetables even to the point of incurring some criticism from the Joint Scrutiny Committee. But I now have to fulfil the duties imposed on me under the Rates Act which was passed by this House, and that is why the order comes before us today.

I have been accused by Opposition Members of imposing limits and refusing to explain how they have been calculated. Great play has been made about assumptions and guidelines. I will tackle those criticisms head on.

The word "assumptions" does not apply to the whole process of calculating the rate limits. It is a legally precise word, the meaning of which is clear from section 8 of the Rates Act. It is only if there is a particular figure that I should have had from the council and have not had that I am entitled to make an assumption to fill the gap. Where information has been provided, I need make no assumptions. I have tried to get the information I need from each authority to enable me to consider its financial reserve position. We put out a special questionnaire last October. It is only where authorities have not given the necessary information that I have had to make assumptions about particular figures—for example, spending shortfall at the end of this year.

Whether or not I have had to make assumptions in arriving at the proposed rate limits, I had used some consistent guidelines as a means of ensuring even-handed treatment between authorities. The guidelines are not allowed to be overriding, because I have to look at each authority's individual circumstances. I think it would be helpful if I spelt out to the House the two general guidelines that I have used.

First, in considering authorities whose reserves—that is, their rate fund balances and special funds—seemed large, I compared them with the reserves held by other authorities, if any, of the same class. The figures that I used were 10 per cent. of total expenditure for metropolitan counties and districts, 15 per cent. for the London boroughs, and 30 per cent. for shire districts. Where authorities' reserves were greater, it was reasonable to expect them to reduce their reserves to something closer to the average.

Secondly, as regards special funds, my concern was that, where authorities were budgeting to make substantial use of special funds in 1984-85, their reserves might be run down too far and leave inadequate reserves for 1985-86. Where authorities had budgeted to use special funds this

year which exceeded 5 per cent. of their expenditure levels, I took account of that excess in fixing the rate limit. The 5 per cent. figure was that which the Haringey treasurer had been able to calculate from the figures that he had.

I have said all along that I would be ready to discuss any individual authority's assumptions if that authority appealed under the Act and proposed a higher limit. No authority has done that, so there been no such discussions.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jenkin: No. I want to development my argument, if I may.

Secondly, I am prepared to open up the debate on assumptions only in the proper context—that is to say, a proper appeal under the Act for a different rate limit. It is now as plain as a pikestaff that the Labour councils never had any intention of making the proper use of the appeals procedure under the Act. I invite the House to look at the Blunkett report which was made available to the press and others during the past few weeks. The report was prepared by Mr. David Blunkett, the leader of Sheffield council, for the local government management committee, and is dated 16 January. I shall not weary the House by reading the whole report, but only what it set out as its objectives in wanting to send representatives to meet me — representatives who came on 4 February. Their aim was to achieve the following:

"(i) place the Secretary of State on the defensive and force him to respond and to look negative and unbending.

(ii) ensure that should he lay Parliamentary Orders, he cannot claim that authorities have simply refused to meet him and that they and not him are obstructive and bloody minded . . .

(iii) ensure that at the councils' budget meetings in March, elected members cannot be accused of failing to challenge the Secretary of State face to face in this way . . .

(iv) prevent the break up of groups arguing about whether or not we should meet Jenkin, which is not a central issue and may well become a diversion which would unnecessarily damage the much more important long term struggle.

(v) dislocate the Department's Parliamentary timetable."

Those were the objectives. Therefore, I am perfectly entitled to view any suggestion that they should come and discuss the assumptions as unwise.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is all very well for the Minister to tell the House about the political tactics of various Labour councils, but he is speaking to the House, not to individual Labour councils. He is asking the House to make certain assumptions and to reach certain conclusions on the order. All that we have constantly asked is that he should come clean with the House and tell Members of Parliament the basis of his assumptions on the reserve. We do not want to hear about the councils—we want him to tell Members of Parliament.

Mr. Jenkin: What matters both to the councils and to the House is the rate limits themselves, not the detailed figuring by which they were reached. If the councils had wanted to discuss the detailed figuring, they had their remedy; they could have appealed, but they refused to do so.

Mr. Straw: As the Secretary of State has said, we are talking about the authority of Parliament, not the decisions and judgments of individual members of local councils. Parliament is being asked to make decisons on orders about which Parliament is being denied the necessary information. Late in the day, the Secretary of State has given the briefest possible details of some of the principles behind his calculations. Is he now willing to give the House the calculations themselves?

Mr. Jenkin: No, because what matters for both the councils and the House is not how the figures are arrived at but whether the rate limit in the order is reasonable for the council to levy. That is the only thing that matters. It is a question whether the council can rate sensibly and live within its limits.

As to the rate limits themselves, I thought it reasonable to leave eight of the authorities with the rate limits I originally proposed. In four of those authorities, ratepayers can look for an actual reduction this year, and in the other authorities rates will be less than they would have been without rate capping.

For the other five authorities in the schedule, I have made changes in the limit proposed last December to take account of the most up-to-date information. Several councils have supplied me with many facts and figures.

For Islington, there was a change in the estimated product of a penny rate and, therefore, a marginal change in the rate limit. For Hackney and Haringey, there were auditors' letters warning of deficits. For Lewisham, its creative accounting this year artificially reduced its apparent spending, and I have made allowance for that. Finally, Leicester gave more details of its reserves and I have taken account of that.

My purpose throughout has been to uphold the purpose of the Rates Act and to protect ratepayers from exorbitant rate increases. The real saving for ratepayers is to compare what the rates will be next year with what they would otherwise have been in the absence of rate capping. Conveniently, Councillor Blunkett and his friends have furnished me with the ammunition. At our meeting on February 4, they tabled a paper with detailed figures showing what each council would have spent if it had not been ratecapped. From that, I have worked out what their rates would have had to be.

For example, in Greenwich ratepayers would have faced a 40 per cent. increase instead of a 19 per cent. cut. In Lambeth, it would have been a 49 per cent. increase instead of a 12 per cent. cut. Even where rates will go up next year, the increases will be far below what would have happened if those spending figures had been allowed. In Basildon, the rate increase would have been twice as high. In Thamesdown, it would have been more than six times as high. In Hackney, it would have been more than seven times as high—an appalling increase of 168 per cent. if it had spent at the level it wanted.

If, as I hope, the House approves this order, all the selected authorities will have had rate or precept limits set for them. That is the time for them to abandon the rhetoric and comply with the law. The law requires a council to set a budget and to levy a rate sufficient to meet it. A council which deliberately fails to rate will have to borrow to cover its spending. Any extra interest incurred could well be regarded by an auditor as a loss or deficiency for which the councillors responsible could be surcharged. If the surcharge is more than £2,000, they are automatically disqualified from office. So the issue becomes one for the rule of law.

I must ask where the Opposition stand on that issue. Will the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) make it

[Mr. Jenkin]

clear in his speech where he stands? Will he repudiate any statement by Labour councils that they intend to break the law? He has said that the Labour party's position is clear. The only problem is, which Labour party is he being clear about—the one that is prepared to obey the law or the one that is not?

My hon. Friends know that the Labour party is riven down the middle on this issue. Its leader says that one cannot pick and choose which law to obey, but many of the council leaders are saying exactly that. The Opposition's nightmare must be that, where the miners and Mr. Scargill leave off, the Labour town halls will carry on. The hon. Member for Blackburn owes it to his party to defend the decent, moderate law-abiding labour councillors who have no wish to defy the law.

Rate capping 18 councils will save more than £500 million of public expenditure during the coming year. That saving has let me set fairer targets for the far larger number of prudent councils, and, no less important, put a ceiling on the rates of the 18 councils that will protect their ratepayers from the exorbitant rate demands with which they would otherwise have been faced.

That is the purpose behind the Rates Act that Parliament passed last year, and it is a purpose that will not be thwarted by the incompetence or obstinacy of the councils. If the House approves the order tonight, as I hope it will, it will be for those councils to accept the will of Parliament and make their rates accordingly.

4.19 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am deeply grateful to the Secretary of State for his kind remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who is in bed with severe bronchitis. I am sure that the whole House joins me in wishing him a speedy recovery. I know that we all agree about that, but it is probably the only matter on which we shall agree today.

In seven and a half hours of debate, the House is asked to determine the budgets and rates of 13 major local authorities, which last year spent £1,200 million, which employ 120,000 staff and which are responsible for the provision of essential services for more than 3 million people in areas as different as Sheffield, Southwark, Lambeth and Leicester.

Today's order represents the culmination of a squalid and politically corrupt process presided over by a Secretary of State who is blind to the consequences of his actions and whose name has become a by-word for incompetence in an Administration in whom there are many competitors for such an accolade.

So unsure and uncertain of himself and so lacking in confidence in his judgments is this Secretary of State that, in laying these instruments before Parliament, he has refused, as we heard only moments ago, to provide almost any information to hon. Members about the basis on which he has made the decisions embodied in the orders. When, a few moments ago, I asked him to provide the House with the calculations, he replied with the direct negative, "No".

In doing that, the Secretary of State shows not only contempt of a serious and flagrant kind for the House but also breaks solemn pledges that he gave to Parliament less than 12 months ago. As I have reminded Conservative Members on three occasions—I make no apology for doing so again—the prophets of the new Right, Karl Popper and Hayek, have eloquently warned that, while it is easy to centralise power, it is extremely difficult to centralise the information to exercise that power wisely. Indeed, Popper's criticism could well have been directed at the monstrous centralist system of controls of which the Secretary of State has been the architect.

Last year, when the Rates Act was being pushed through, we spent hours in Committee and on the Floor of the House challenging the Secretary of State to spell out how he would be able wisely to substitute his judgment —that of one man—for the judgment of hundreds of councillors, each with skill, knowledge and expertise of the areas they served. To those challenges the Secretary of State replied, as he did today, that he was a reasonable man, that his mind was ajar, that in any event the law would require him to act reasonably and that above all it would not be his decision alone, but that of Parliament, to rate-cap authorities.

Thus, on 27 March last year, in resisting Opposition amendments which were designed to ensure that at least we should have separate debates for each authority rate capped, the Secretary of State spoke movingly about the supervisory role of the House overs Ministers. Earlier in the year, on Second Reading, he said—to persuade not least the many sceptics on the Conservative Benches—that

"unless the spending limit is agreed, it is only with the authority of the House that the capping process can take effect. It is not true that it is a matter for the Secretary of State alone."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1984; Vol. 52, c. 180.]

When the point was developed in Committee, the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), said:

"We of course recognise that the disagreed rate limit order is the point in the procedure at which Parliament has the opportunity to scrutinise the Government's proposals."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 28 February 1984; c. 804-5.]

Unless that scrutiny is to be a contemptible farce, Parliament must be given the information on which the Secretary of State has made his judgments, and it must be given time to consider those judgments. It has been given neither.

Repeatedly, since the rate limits were announced in mid-December, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland has, by parliamentary question and by letter direct to the Secretary of State, sought from the right hon. Gentleman details of the basis on which he had arrived at the rate limits set down in the orders. Repeatedly the Secretary of State has refused all information, and he has done so on the most spurious and disreputable grounds.

On 30 January, the right hon. Gentleman said that he was willing only to give details of how he had arrived at his proposed limits in the context of negotiations with authorities about possible alternative limits, but he went on:

"I have of course acted with consistency between authorities and it is my firm belief that the rate and precept limits I have set are reasonable for each authority."

Dr. Hampson: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the only effective source of such information is the local authority, would he say that the inability of that information to come through to the Government, particularly in the case of Haringey, shows incompetence or malice?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman has not followed my argument because I am saying precisely the opposite. I am

saying that the only source of information about the judgments behind the orders is that of the Secretary of State and not that of the local authorities.

Dr. Hampson: Answer my question.

Mr. Straw: I am answering the hon. Gentleman. As for Haringey, the Secretary of State told Parliament on 11 February that he had had all the information he needed from Haringey.

Dr. Hampson: It is incompetence, therefore?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman talks of incompetence. The record of the local authorities in judging their budget out-turns is far better than that of central Government. Consider the record of any local authority and its attempts halfway through the year to judge whether it will be in deficit or in surplus. Then compare that with the record of Treasury Ministers in judging whether the public sector borrowing requirement will be £8 billion or £13 billion. One can see whose record is one of incompetence. Year after year the Treasury Bench, by billions of pounds, mistakes its estimates of the public sector borrowing requirement. Local authorities need no lectures from this Government, of all Governments, about competence.

I quoted the reply of the Secretary of State in his letter of 30 January saying that the limits that he had set for each authority were reasonable. We know that the right hon. Gentleman would say that he had acted reasonably. In view of his record, however, it is asking too much even of the most supine of his supporters on the Conservative Benches to expect them to judge that the rate orders are reasonably simple because he says they are.

The Secretary of State's explanations reached their most bizarre in a letter which he sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland last Friday, 22 February. Again, the right hon. Gentleman refused to publish full details of the basis on which he had arrived at the rate limits, and he said:

"What are before the House for approval"—

and he said the same this afternoon—

"are not the detailed calculations by which I have arrived at the rate limits, but the limits themselves. The question is whether or not the rate limits are reasonable."

Of course, that is the question, but the query that we put to the right hon. Gentleman is how on earth can the House possibly be expected to judge whether the limits are reasonable when he is denying us the information on which he has made them.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman when I have finished quoting from his letter. He had the unbelievable reply to our request that

"the authorities are themselves in possession of all the information they need to make that judgment, and to brief Members of Parliament accordingly."

I now give way to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Jenkin: I did not think that the hon. Gentleman intended to quote the last part of the letter.

Mr. Straw: I will do the right hon. Gentleman the justice of quoting the whole of his letter, if he wishes; I have read only the most bizarre part of it. By definition and by the very face of the orders, none of the authorities specified in them regards the rate limits that have been set as reasonable. If they had regarded them as reasonable, they would have agreed them with the right hon. Gentleman, as did Portsmouth, and there would have been no order for us to debate.

The question, in any event—although the Secretary of State keeps speaking about the authority of Parliament—is not whether the authorities regard the limits as reasonable, because we know that none of them does, but whether this House regards them as reasonable. The right hon. Gentleman is saying that he will not release this information and that it is up to the authorities to engage in a ludicrous game of arithmetical cat and mouse in which they must go through the process of iterative algebra until they come up with what they think lies in the Secretary of State's fevered imagination.

The Secretary of State pleads in his defence that the authorities have not come to him with the information that he requires. However, he knows—he is damned out of his own mouth—that that is not the case. All the authorities responded by the 15 January deadline with mountains of information for him and his advisers. So much so did they do that that in the case of Haringey—when he was confidently seeking to justify his original decision to Parliament that Haringey should suffer a 3p in the pound rate reduction—he claimed:

"I have not needed to make any assumptions, as all the figures required to calculate its rate limit have been supplied to me at various times by the council itself."—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 19.]

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is true, but the wrong figures were given and the deficit was not revealed. That information came only a few days ago.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman must take up that argument with the district auditor. It was the information from the district auditor that led to the Secretary of State's change of mind. I know from conversations that I have had with members of Haringey borough council that they were very concerned about the financial chaos into which the right hon. Gentleman's original decision would have plunged them. They were seeking to alert the Secretary of State to that fact.

The Secretary of State has complained that authorities did not see him before December 1984 to negotiate on rate limits. He is right to say that representatives of the authorities did not go to see him. This happened because the pre-conditions which he imposed upon the negotiations were so onerous that not even Conservative Portsmouth dared to risk them. The leader of that Conservative-controlled council, Mr. Ian Gibson, said:

"The thing about redetermination is that it could come with strings attached that my council could not possibly accept."

The Secretary of State imposed outrageous pre-conditions and soured the atmosphere of negotiations. When authorities came to negotiate with him at the beginning of the year, he pulled the rug from under the negotiations by rushing orders through the House when the Act that he had placed on the statute book provided a more measured procedure for setting interim maxima. The Committee which considered that measure last year was told that the procedure would provide flexibility while negotiations were continuing.

The real motive of the Secretary of State in refusing Parliament information on which to make a judgment is revealed at the end of the right hon. Gentleman's letter to which I have already referred.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Even if negotiations were to take place between each local authority and the

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

Secretary of State in arriving at a fair rate cap, my hon. Friend is right to lay emphasis on the need for the House to be informed. The House must satisfy itself that there is fairness between one local authority and another in the rate cap that the Secretary of State proposes to apply. That test of fairness is impossible for us to decide unless we know the assumptions on which the right hon. Gentleman is operating.

Mr. Straw: I accept what my hon. Friend has said. The end of the Secretary of State's letter reads:

"The demands of many of the rate capped authorities for detailed information on the background figures stem from their desire to make mischief and disrupt the Parliamentary timetable."

In yesterday's edition of *The Sunday Times* the right hon. Gentleman was quoted as saying of the authorities:

"Their object is to embarrass me, and to make the whole process unworkable."

He went on to accuse councils of presenting "a Marxist challenge" to the parliamentary decision-making process. He used words to that effect earlier this afternoon. Were this not such a serious matter, the sorry farce which he has created in the local government financial system would owe much more to Groucho Marx than to Karl Marx.

We do not need to make the system unworkable because it is unworkable. We do not need to embarrass the Secretary of State because he does that quite well himself without our help. Only someone reckless of his own political future as well as monumentally insensitive to the democratic process would believe that Parliament could and should consider a rate-capping order laid the previous day and amended in such haste by the Secretary of State that the correction on the official version available from the Vote Office appeared in Biro over Snopake and not in print. That is how it has appeared before the House today.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman spoke in rather derisory terms about Marxism and councils' defiance. Does he recall what Hilda Kean, the leader of the Hackney council, was quoted as saying in "London Labour Briefing" in March 1984? She said:

"Defiance should be maintained at every level and any public platform, including the council chamber, will serve."

Mr. Straw: Mrs. Hilda Kean can answer for herself. I seek to deal with the order before the House and the due process which Parliament is being expected to follow without proper information on which to make decisions.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): When the Secretary of State was making his rather lengthy and inaccurate attack on borough councils and their spending, and by innuendo on their powers of decision making, does my hon. Friend agree that it is significant that at every stage and at each attack on individual councils he refused to say how much money his Department and he personally have taken away from the boroughs in the past six years? It is the removal of these moneys that has caused rates to rise. Rate increases have had nothing to do with local spending. There is an increasing number of unmet needs in many of the rate-capped authorities and the order will make them more numerous and worse and not better.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. At no stage in his speech did the Secretary of State show a recognition of the consequences of his action for authority staff and the hundreds of thousands of those who depend upon authorities for the quality of their daily lives.

The Secretary of State claims that local authorities wish to make mischief. By this, the right hon. Gentleman means that some rate-capped authorities might take him to court for being unreasonable. What arrogance he has and what amnesia, too. Time and again in Committee last year, following the tabling of amendments by the Opposition designed to increase the scrutiny of Parliament and to set out explicitly in the Bill, as it then was, that the Secretary of State had to act reasonably, the right hon. Gentleman sought to reassure us by saying that reasonableness was a duty upon him in any event and that all his actions would be justiciable—in other words, testable in the courts.

If Labour-controlled authorities are making mischief when they seek information about decisions which affect all their services, and if Labour Members are making mischief when they seek information before they are forced to make a judgment on the order, will the Secretary of State apply the same insult to Mr. Justice Forbes, who is hearing the action between the GLC, ILEA and the Secretary of State? Mr. Justice Forbes said last Friday that he expected the Secretary of State to provide to the court the information that he is now seeking to deny to the House. It appears that the right hon. Gentleman may be playing the same game with the High Court of justice as he is with the high court of Parliament. There are serious fears that he may be about to claim Crown privilege for the information that the GLC and ILEA are seeking. If that is not the position, I offer the right hon. Gentleman the opportunity to intervene.

Can the proposed system operate without chaos and indecision when indecision has characterised the Secretary of State's actions? He will recall that in the Green Paper entitled "Alternatives to Domestic Rates" the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who is now Secretary of State for Defence, stated:

"the case for the Government taking such powers"—

draconian powers to control rates—

"has to be judged against the very considerable constitutional and practical difficulties that would be involved."

If reasonableness is to be the test of whether the order should be accepted, that must be the test of the limits and the selection of authorities. The authorities in question were all Labour controlled when the selection was made and that control has continued at all the authorities except Brent.

At the commencement of my speech I charged the Secretary of State with operating a politically corrupt system, a phrase that I chose with care. The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are obsessed by the fact that the electors of the selected authorities have had the temerity to elect councils that are controlled by a party different from their own. The authorities have pursued policies designed to meet needs in their areas and to counteract the appalling savagery that has been inflicted on their economies and peoples by the Government's reckless and hopeless policies over the past six years. The Secretary of State has no confidence in the ability or intelligence of the electors to make their own judgments about their authorities and their willingness to pay for the services that are provided. Instead, he rides roughshod over their wishes.

If the Secretary of State is hurt by the charge of political corruption, let him explain the difference in his treatment of Britain's poorest areas and Britain's richest. It happens that Hackney and the City of London lie cheek by jowl. It happens, too, that on the Department's criteria, Hackney is Britain's poorest borough while the City of London is the richest. In an endeavour to meet the terrifying need in its area, Hackney borough council has increased its expenditure by 151 per cent. The City of London has surpassed any other authority by increasing its expenditure by 274 per cent. The increases have taken place since 1978-79 and these are the Department's own figures. On the right hon. Gentleman's criterion, which he has described as robust and objective, Hackney is 41 per cent. in excess of its grant-related expenditure assessment while the City of London has exceeded its by 263 per cent. Hackney has been rate capped, but the City of London has not. Moreover, to fit Hackney into the frame the Secretary of State had to bend his own rules.

Some local authority expenditure in which central Government have played a leading part—for example, urban programmes and projects jointly financed with health authorities—is disregarded by the Secretary of State in calculating the authorities' penalty. Had it also been disregarded for rate-capping purposes, as any reasonable Secretary of State would have done, Hackney would not have been rate capped even on the present Secretary of State's criteria.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): If the hon. Gentleman is calling for the City of London to be rate capped, he should remember that London would suffer because the City of London contributes hundreds of millions of pounds per year to the rate equalisation scheme.

Mr. Straw: I am not suggesting that the City of London should be rate capped. I am suggesting that Hackney should not be rate capped. I am glad that the Minister for Local Government, who does not share the Secretary of State's view of the objectivity and robustness of the GREA criteria, believes that London would suffer if another council in London was rate capped. The logical conclusion is that no authority should be rate capped because so much damage is being done to this great city by that policy and by the policy of abolition.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I shall not give way.

There is no other explanation for what the Government have done to Hackney than that they wished to stitch that authority up because its political colour did not suit them. Merit and excellence of service is the Secretary of State's last consideration.

Two rate-capped authorities—Sheffield and Basildon—have been singled out for insult by the Secretary of State but they have been singled out for praise by the Audit Commission. That independent body was created by the Government and endowed at the its inception with nothing but virtue, but it is now subject to slights and insults because it has begun to tell the truth about local authorities while the Government continue to repeat their own lies. The Controller of the Audit Commission, John Banham, said not only that Sheffield council had achieved outstanding value for money but:

"There is no connection between rate capping and value for money . . . It does not follow that the reason Sheffield is being rate capped is because it is providing bad value for money any more than it necessarily follows that all the authorities that are not rate capped are providing good value".

When it was put to him that Sheffield was losing £15 million in grant he commented:

"That is a lot of money to be losing. And if you are penalised as well, then you are suddenly losing very large sums of money indeed".

The Audit Commission said that in Basildon there were opportunities to improve value for money locally, as there are in most authorities, but that the study showed that the council seemed to manage its basic services more effectively than the average.

Some rate-capped authorities have increased expenditure faster than the average. [HON. MEMBERS: "And their rates."] The rate increases have been due to the Secretary of State's policies. If rate support grant had remained at 61 per cent., as it was under the Labour Government, and if no penalty system had been introduced, rates in most of the rate-capped areas would be half the present level. As the Audit Commission pointed out, however, it does not follow that high spending is in any sense a sign of waste or profligacy. Thamesdown has spent more than the mean-minded districts elsewhere in Wiltshire. Much of the prosperity of north Wiltshire, for which the Tories now seek to take credit, was built on the pioneering work of the Labour-controlled Thamesdown council and its predecessor, Swindon borough council.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I have given way enough already.

Recognising the disastrous consequences that the Beeching cuts would have on a town so dependent on one industry——

Mr. Key *rose*——

Mr. Straw: —the hon. Gentleman can make his own comments later—those authorities set about diversifying the industrial base and providing decent homes for people previously in overcrowded accommodation in our capital. Rate-capping Thamesdown is doubly unfair because the increase in spending occurred years ago. The Government's own figures show that since 1978-79 the increase has been exactly the rate of inflation and 7 per cent. below the average for local authorities. In west Wiltshire, spending increased by 120 per cent. and in north Wiltshire by 94 per cent., but those authorities are Tory-controlled. The same applies in Sheffield and Haringey. Despite the calumnies heaped upon them, their spending has been exactly the average for all authorities since 1978-79.

Good, caring authorities should not be in the dock today. It should be the unbelievably callous and mean-minded authorities such as east Sussex, which spends even less than the Government say that it should, which has abolished school meals for all but the children of those on social security and has told pupils who cannot afford school meals to bring sandwiches instead. It has cut the staff in adult education by one third and in the youth service by a half. It has reduced the capitation allowance in schools by 20 per cent. and even axed one third of school crossing patrols.

The Secretary of State has said not a word about the effect of his policies on the people in the areas concerned. He seeks to justify the authoritarian and anti-democratic

[Mr. Straw]

system over which he presides by claiming to be the ratepayer's protector. What humbug. Even Conservative Central Office, in its confidential briefings on the rate limitation orders which, like all its other briefings on local government, are sent to the Opposition by a well-wisher there, has discovered that rates in England have gone up far faster than prices. As the Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils has pointed out time and again, that is because the Government have cut the rate support grant. The Secretary of State points to lower percentage increases this year, but the cash increases will be much higher because they are made against a much higher base.

For many authorities rates have been forced up not just by cuts in rate support grant but by the vicious penalty system whereby authorities can lose as much as £9 for every £1 expenditure over target. The great protector of the ratepayer who has forced rates up throughout the country gives himself away in the order laid before Parliament this month. In five cases, rates are not being cut but forced up — by 27 per cent. on Merseyside, 23 per cent. in Hackney, 17 per cent. in Haringey, 6 per cent. in Thamesdown and 18 per cent. in Basildon. It might be different if the people in those areas were to benefit from a commensurate increase in expenditure, but under the Government's crazy and malicious system those people will be the last to benefit. After the water tax, the electricity tax, the gas tax and the tax on teeth, we now have the rates tax. For every £3 extra raised in rates, £2 will go not to the ratepayers or to the council but straightback to the Treasury. The Government and not the local councils are responsible for the rate increases in rate-capped and non-rate-capped areas alike.

When the argument about responsibility for rate increases fails him, the Secretary of State challenges the democratic basis of local government by saying that not all voters pay rates. On this point, it is time that the Secretary of State either put up or shut up. The only conclusion that can possibly flow from his argument is that only those who pay rates should have votes. If that is the Secretary of State's proposal, he should have the courage to say so. If it is not, what else is he trying to prove? In reality, local government is far more accountable to its electorate than central Government. More households pay rates than pay income tax. Is the Secretary of State suggesting that pensioners, the unemployed and people on low incomes who do not pay income tax should have their vote in national elections taken away? Local government needs no lectures from the present Administration. Despite the swingeing cuts in rate support grant, central Government expenditure and taxation have risen much faster than rates. For the average family, rates constitute one-thirteenth of their total tax bill—£6 per week out of a total of £75 per week.

Business men, too, know who is responsible for their rate increases. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce has complained that the cut in rate support grant from 61 per cent. in 1978-79 to 48 per cent. in 1985-86

"is a clear example of how the burden of direct taxation has been moved from taxes on individuals to taxes on business".

If the Secretary of State is so confident about his argument on rates and jobs, perhaps he will now tell us why the number of jobless in Birmingham rose faster when rates were being cut by the Conservatives and whether and when he intends to publish the Cambridge report on rates and jobs. That report wholly condemned the Secretary of State's arguments, who so far has even refused to say when he will publish it. If he had had any confidence in his own arguments, and in the reputation of that report, he would have told the House when it would be published.

Where will all this lead, and what is behind this destruction of local democracy? These rate-capping orders will produce no gratitude in the areas affected, where Government policies have meant that rates have increased while services have been reduced. The shire district elections showed that in Thamesdown, Basildon and Leicester. The metropolitan county and GLC elections would have shown it this year had the Secretary of State not been so scared of the outcome that he had to cancel them.

Nor will this mad policy produce benefits for those for whom this incompetent Secretary of State claims to speak —those in the Tory shires. They found it impossible to believe at first, but they have now come to the astonishing truth that if rate-capping brings expenditures down in the rate-capped areas, it will force the rates up in the non-rate-capped areas. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman's own figures show that if all authorities were to do what he tells them, and spent at their GREA, one Conservative-controlled shire county and shire district after another would lose millions of pounds in grant. The Minister of State's own district, Mole Valley, would receive no grant, and rates in Surrey, Essex, Kent, east Sussex, west Sussex and Wiltshire would be forced up by between 25 per cent. and 40 per cent.

Where exactly will this policy lead? The Secretary of State speaks of his desire to abolish target and penalty, although he has become progressively more reticent on the subject. We want both abandoned, but properly and not to be replaced by a penalty system based on GREA.

The right hon. Gentleman's policies are in ruins, and he knows it. They have failed. But faced with this failure, he does not step back and rationally seek a better way; instead he continues with his failed policies, but more obsessively and frenetically. Will we next year see not 20 but 40 authorities rate-capped, and the following year 60? As so many in the next list are Tory, how will the Secretary of State bend the rules to ensure that once again principally only Labour authorities are punished?

We are being asked to approve the judgment and decisions of a Secretary of State who has lost the confidence of this House, his colleagues and the country. We are asked to approve these orders without information or material upon which to base our judgment. These orders do nothing for the ratepayers whose bills have been increased by the Secretary of State's own actions. They place at risk jobs and services in many of our hardest pressed towns, cities and boroughs. They deprive the electors of those areas of their right to choose. They are an unparalleled exercise in elective dictatorship, and they must be rejected tonight.

4.53 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): It is with deep disappointment, if not anger, that I address my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the rate limitation order that he has just presented to the House. I have some harsh things to say, but I assure my right hon. Friend that I do so without any personal animosity towards him. We

have known each other and have worked together for far too long for that—in the order of 30 years in local government, in opposition and in government.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Can I suggest that we begin by my entertaining the House with a rendition of "My Old Dutch"?

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is typical of the hon. Gentleman and the level down to which he will drag an extremely serious debate.

I also appreciate that my right hon. Friend has inherited policies which were initiated by others and which have left him with the intractable and almost impossible problems of detailed implementation. Moreover, circumstances have come to light in the past few days which were outside his control, as he has adequately explained. Nevertheless, I must reflect the bitterness felt by my constituents, who for the past eight months have looked to a promised reduction in their rates, suddenly to be told that they must face a 17 per cent. increase—this in a borough where the general rate is already 277·77p in the pound, one of the highest in the land.

It is very difficult to respond to a constituent who tells me that when he first came to live in my constituency, in a modest semi-detached house in 1970, he paid £111·32p in rates, inclusive of water rates. This year he is paying £1,259·51p general rates, and as a result of this order he will pay £1,636 plus water rates, which themselves will go up by 10 per cent. as a result of the recent order on which I could not find my way to support the Government.

I must remind my right hon. Friend of the background against which these intolerable burdens are being imposed on my constituents. In the summer of 1974, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as chief environment spokesman for the then Opposition, announced the Conservative Shadow Cabinet's decision to abolish the domestic rate as an unfair and regressive tax, which it is. The memories of that promise still linger in the electorate, although the country rejected that manifesto and elected a Labour Government in October 1974. Hence, it must be said that no compact to abolish rates was made between the Conservative party and the electors.

During the ensuing years of opposition, between 1974 and 1979, the policy was reconsidered and modified in the light of Layfield. The new electoral promise for the 1979 general election was to review the rating system, and public expectations remained understandably high. Between 1979 and 1983, all the possible alternatives to domestic rates were carefully examined by the new Conservative Government of which I was a member. The conclusion was reached that each created more problems than it solved. I was among those who favoured a poll tax as overcoming the difficulties of accountability of which I shall say more in a moment. However, this proposal did not find sufficient favour, and instead we went down the road of central Government seeking to control local government expenditure.

At first, the idea was to penalise local authorities which spent above certain levels, by withdrawal of rate support grant. That makes sense. Why should central Government subsidise a percentage of local authorities' overspending when full account is taken of their needs and resources in the rate support grant? It was hoped that by this method, rather than incurring penalties, local authorities would curb their spending. Some responded, but others such as Haringey went their own sweet way and simply passed on the additional burden to the ratepayers. To overcome that difficulty, rate capping was invented — that is, the imposition of a ceiling on the rates that a local authority may charge.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Sir Hugh Rossi: No, I shall not give way.

For that reason, we expect a combination of a limit on permitted expenditure with penalties, and a limit on the rate that may be charged will bring expenditure under control. As we have been told, the intended consequence for Haringey was a reduction in the rate by 3 per cent. in the coming year. However, Haringey overspent in the current year by nearly £5 million. The Secretary of State must see that deficit eliminated and ensure that it does not recur in the ensuing year. For that reason, the rates cannot be reduced by 3 per cent. On top of that, higher spending attracts even greater penalties, and the rate burden increases even further to balance the books.

A combination of Haringey's profligacy and inefficiency and the penalties imposed by the Government mean that the rate will now be 268·5p in the pound. It is of some comfort for me to be able to tell my constituents that if it were not for rate capping they would face an increase in rates, not of about 17 per cent., but of 54 per cent. On the whole, people are more concerned about what is than what might have been. It remains a difficult proposition to explain, given the background to the entire matter.

Will my right hon. Friend say whether the deficit that Haringey has incurred could have been foreseen? Part of it is caused by the £2·5 million loss by its direct labour organisation. That has not occurred overnight, but has been the subject of public comment locally for the best part of a year. Why was it not examined and the necessary warnings or adjustments made in the Department's figures so that people would not have expected a 3 per cent. decrease in their rates? Furthermore, how is it that the district auditor made a mistake in 1980-81, when he allowed a claim for housing subsidies, which apparently were not justified, and now concludes that claims for housing subsidies must be struck out of the accounts? There appears to be a muddle in more than one direction.

Does not that tell us that rate capping may never work? I have already asked my right hon. Friend whether, by incurring a deficit, a local authority can evade rate capping. He gave me something of an assurance and warned that recurring deficits would bring the wrath of the law on the heads of those involved. It is all very well saying that, but it would be far better to avoid a deficit in the first place. Although, in answer to an intervention, my right hon. Friend said that he could not give a direction to a district auditor about how the auditor carries out his duties, will my right hon. Friend seek powers that will enable him in suitable circumstances to ask for a monthly audit from authorities that are known to be inefficient or incapable of running their financial affairs properly?

I have no truck with Haringey. Its grant-related expenditure is 30 per cent. above that of neighbouring boroughs, yet it spends 34 per cent. above that. That is pure profligacy. For years the direct labour organisation has been running a deficit, but because of the mental attitude of councillors and, behind them, certain unions

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

whom they fear, they dare not touch the direct labour organisation and ensure that it runs efficiently and correctly. How does one overcome that problem?

I now turn to education expenditure. Despite a declining school roll and the closing of schools, the non-teaching establishment has increased year after year. The cost per child is way above the expenditure of equivalent authorities with equal problems and similar ethnic groups within their communities. It is worth while remembering what Her Majesty's inspectorate recently said about the education system in Haringey:

"The impression gained in the schools inspected was that, regardless of the ethnic background, few pupils were receiving overall the quality of education they need and have a right to expect. The causes of this state of affairs are not to do with a shortage or absence of resources."

We know that they are more than abundantly provided. The report continues:

"Rather they lie with . . . a shortage of effective leadership and planning at many points in the system"——

that is the direct responsibility of councillors——

"inadequate checks on whether or not available resources and support agencies are being used to best effect"——

that is also the direct responsibility of local councillors ——

"and shortcomings in the oversight of teaching and learning."

That is a comment on the education system. A bad service is provided despite the tremendously high costs. Resources are not the answer. The answer is proper management and effective direction from the top, but it is not being given. A report on virtually every other service for which Haringey council is responsible would have a similar conclusion. That is where the problem lies.

How do we overcome the problem? The Government seek to do so with a combination of penalties and rate capping. It is virtually imposible for central Government to control local government to its finest detail. Resources at the Department of the Environment do not exist, and the will and wish does not exist among officials at the Department of the Environment to turn themselves into local government officers, as they would have to do if there was to be an effective, detailed control of local authorities.

I have always believed that there is a better road to follow. In a contest between central Government and local government, surely central Government are bound to lose. First, no methods can be made truly effective. The fact that we must debate this order in this way is a sign of that. Secondly, such a contest leads to totally unnecessary confrontation between central Government and local government, which should be avoided at all costs. The traditions of local government are extremely strong. I had the privilege to serve in local government at both borough and county levels for 10 years before I came to the House. I appreciate and understand the value of local government. I also recall the slogan of the Conservative party in those days and for many years thereafter:

"Town Hall not Whitehall knows best."

Now it seems to have forgotten that slogan. We must trust the people more—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am being cheered by the Opposition, who will say that the ballot box is the answer. I now come to accountability. The ballot box would be the answer to all those problems, and the electors would exercise the proper disciplines upon their elected councillors if the electors and the ratepayers were the same, but they are not. For many years, we have consciously eroded the principle of accountability. We have reached the point where many people who pay rates do not vote. We abolished the business man's vote and have never restored it, and in many areas businesses bear a substantial part of the rate burden.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to make his own speech in his own way.

Many people who vote do not pay or perceive themselves to pay rates. The consequence must be that councillors are subject to greater pressure from those who want more and more expenditure to suit their tastes and interests, and the people who must pick up the bill have a smaller and smaller voice in the way in which the money is spent. If the House believes that the ballot box and the people are the best way of dealing with the rating problem, it should address itself to that question.

I must tell Ministers that they have made a mistake in going down this road of trying to impose central Government control on local authorities. A local authority must be controlled by its electors, and its electors must be the people who pay the bills. Then we shall have the control that is necessary. That is why I favoured a poll tax when we considered ways in which to replace the domestic rating system.

For all the reasons that I have given, I regret that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not find me with him in the Lobby tonight.

5.12 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): This debate is based on a series of ludicrous propositions. We are being asked to examine the budgets, spending plans and needs of 13 local authorities—nine in London and four outside—and we are being asked to limit not the money that they are given by central Government but the money that they can raise from their residents, ratepayers and electors, even though the primary purpose behind the order has been regularly shown to be defective.

The most recent authoritative example of that was the leader in *The Times* on Saturday of last week, which stated:

"We turn . . . to one of the paltry efforts made by the Government to explicate its policy, *Protecting the ratepayer*, randomly distributed in the rate-capped areas. It makes a promise. 'If you are a ratepayer in one of the areas affected, your rates next year will be lower than they would otherwise have been.' But why then is the Government allowing Merseyside a rates increase of 27 per cent., Hackney a rise of 22 per cent., and awarding Haringey"—

we have just heard a powerful and poignant speech from a Conservative Member of Parliament from the borough of Haringey—

"a rates rise up to 16·5 per cent.?"

The Secretary of State has calculated his figures on the basis of assumptions as to the reserves that local authorities have. Some he knows, but, as he said in a parliamentary answer and has repeated since, some he has had to guess. The folly of that exercise has been illustrated by the Haringey experience. The Secretary of State made an order, discovered new figures, withdrew it and recalculated the figures at the last moment.

There is a second and equally valid objection to the exercise. We are trying to determine the maximum rates permitted to those 13 authorities when the reasonableness

of the assumptions has not yet been established, not even in relation to the four precepting authorities. The GLC and ILEA are the two precepting authorities on the nine London boroughs. Let us imagine that the High Court rules in one or both of the cases before it that the Secretary of State has acted unreasonably and that he has made an error, arithmetical or otherwise, in his calculations. What will ILEA and the GLC do when they meet on 7 March? Will they have the power to make a rate or will they decide that they cannot because a new order must be laid before the House?

If they cannot or do not make a rate, despite the fact that the Act obliges them to do so by 10 March, because the rate-cap limit determined by the Secretary of State is invalid, what will the London boroughs do when they meet that evening? Should they go ahead and make their rates, although they do not know what the GLC and ILEA will ask for? The Whitehall against town hall meetings advertised in boroughs such as mine will be a farce. At great expense, most rate-capped London boroughs are inviting their populations to attend their town halls on 7 March. If they all turn up, the councils will need slightly more room than Peckham town hall and other venues. It will be even more ludicrous if ratepayers must pay for the exercise but then discover that the authorities cannot make their rates.

The third objection is that we have a maximum of eight hours in which to judge the budgets and budgetary restraints that should be imposed upon 13 local authorities, which have a population of millions. It takes local authority officers and members weeks to work out the appropriate figures, after minute poring over detail. As the Secretary of State said in debates on the Rates Act last year, the House is meant to scrutinise such matters. However, it can only be a rubber stamp. That is not entirely appropriate. Parliament has been asked suddenly to replace the local authorities in making those decisions, yet it is given no real opportunity or inadequate information to do its job properly.

The entire exercise is folly. *The Times* stated:

"A little arithmetic. The City of Westminster, indelibly Conservative, prides itself on its efficiency and its history of minimising taxation. . . . All told, Westminster will be asking them to pay nearly 7 per cent. more in the current year. So much for the benefits of rates limitation."

The thrust of the Government's activity on rates is that by limiting the rates in some areas, which means that not so much penalty will be imposed in some areas, more money must be raised elsewhere. The shire counties and districts will have to pay more for the folly of the order.

Then there is the final folly. Any document will show that public spending by Governments has increased far more considerably than local authority expenditure by councils. It should be that expenditure that the Government seek to get under control first. They have concentrated on the wrong targets.

We should address this argument in the context of the history of local government expenditure. The Layfield committee, which reported in May 1976, made the point that, since 1890, local authority spending has been growing steadily and at a faster rate than the economy as a whole. Increasingly, more money has been spent by, and on behalf of, local councils, with a varying amount of support from central funds. The pattern has been that since the war, in general terms, the amount of money contributed to local spending by Government has gone up from 34 per cent. in 1949-50 to 37 per cent. in 1959-60 and to 40 per cent. in 1969-70. If we take the criteria of relevant expenditure, it has gone up from 51 per cent. in 1964-65 to its peak of 67·3 per cent. of all local spending serviced by Government from the taxpayer in 1975-76. Since then, the percentage has gone down.

There is no validity in the argument now being voiced by many local authorities that use as a slogan "Give us back our millions" because they are not their million. They are the taxpayers' millions and for as long as we allow central Government to have their hand on the larger part of local authority expenditure, there will always be intervention, arbitrariness and the power to increase or decrease by central Government according to whatever they think are the appropriate criteria.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Member represents part of a poor borough and is talking about self-sufficiency in local government. I should have thought that the likely effects on Southwark and particularly his part of Southwark—Bermondsey—which is one of the poorer parts, will be catastrophic. What little help it gets from central Government will be taken away and the council will be destroyed as a force for doing good and making social changes in that part of London. While he reflects on that, will he tell us what he would do should he be faced with these problems if he were in control of Southwark town hall?

Mr. Hughes: The point that there has to be redistribution and equalisation through payments by the rich to the poor is a valid one. We would not take away the need for local authorities to have contributions from the taxpayer, but the folly of the present system is that the bulk of the money comes centrally from the taxpayer and then goes to meet the cost of all the services, not just redistributing money but serving the large part of the expenditure of local authorities as well. Boroughs such as Southwark that are poor and need central Government support should have it, but that should not be the principal source of support. Local communities should be that source of support and as far as it is possible the money should be raised there, so that it is in the control of local people and not of central Government.

Mr. Corbyn: That means that there will be higher rates in Southwark.

Mr. Hughes: No, that is not so.

There are lost millions, if only those who use the slogan would address their arguments in the proper direction. The lost millions are the millions of pounds that the Government have clawed back by way of penalty. In recent years, an increasing number of millions of pounds, under this bizarre and illogical system, has been lost for every pound that local authorities have spent over the target.

Mr. Straw: We know that.

Mr. Hughes: We know that, but those are the stolen millions — the money that local authorities properly should have in their kitties, but that central Government have taken away. The other money is the taxpayers' and central Government's in the first place, and one cannot validly criticise central Government—be it Labour or Tory, they have both done it equally—for interfering and reducing it over the years. Let us get the argument straight from this point, and we may be able to get some

[Mr. Hughes]

truth out of the murk and the confusion. In the last financial year, £455 million was "held back" by the Government under an unjustifiable system. Those are the missing millions and that is the money that local authorities should have and that central Government should never have taken.

Mr. Dobson: I find some difficulty in following the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he saying that it is just the money that has been held back under the complexities of the recent scheme that can have been regarded as having been stolen? If he is, is he then saying that the fact that the Government have reduced the total handout to these authorities in the first place is of no relevance to their problems?

Mr. Hughes: It is of great relevance, but one cannot say that it is local authority money because it is not. Local authorities have never been able to lay a claim to that money. The Labour party was equally to be criticised because it refused money from central Government to local authorities and this Government have followed the lead of the previous Labour Administration. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) appears not to understand, but the suggestion is that if one wants local autonomy and local democracy, one should give power both to raise revenue and spend it increasingly into the hands, as far as possible, of local authorities.

There is no doubt that savings can be made, and in some local authorities there is inefficiency and waste, which needs to be cut out. If and when the authority in Brent sets its rates in the coming weeks, it will do so without cutting any services. It may be that the level of rates will be at or below the rate-capped limit, but the vital issue, after leaving out waste and making sure that resources are conserved and used properly, is to ensure that one does not mortgage the future. Liverpool and Brent alike have had to sell their mortgages to banks, when they should not have had to. They have had to get rid of assets because the Government are raiding their reserves so much that the only way that they can keep alive this year is by reducing their assets, as long as they can do so legally, to the bare minimum.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is giving the Liberal game away. He is being all things to all people and trying to claim that local authorities such as his own and Liverpool can manage without the Government rate support grant and can raise all their revenue locally, which is not true. However, he has not pointed out that in Brent the Liberals are to side with the Conservatives to cut services. The list of proposed cuts in Brent that will be carried out if the rate-capping order is accepted shows that the Liberals are behaving just as they did when they controlled Liverpool—cutting services, siding with the Tories and putting up council house rents.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is wrong. He and I were in Brent the other day and there was not one accusation that services will be cut. There will not be one redundancy, and there will be nothing that any responsible authority could not stand up and justify. All that Brent is doing are things about which the hon. Gentleman knows, such as rescheduling debts and so on. There will not be, and Liberals would not find it acceptable for there to be, cuts in services. That is the case in Brent, as it will be the case in some other Labour-controlled authorities as well.

Mr. Pavitt: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman must be aware that the present position means that £14 million will be cut. The Liberals in Brent are not accepting it publicly, but behind the scenes are prepared to cut, as I hope that I shall have the opportunity of explaining to the House. If I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall show where the council cuts services.

Mr. Hughes: This is the folly of the present debate. We cannot go into the debate that we should be having about Brent. Brent is managing to reschedule its debts and to deal with some of its capital problems by doing some creative accounting. But there will be no redundancies and no cuts in services. What is more, if Brent was obliged by the order to make such cuts, I am sure that my colleagues would make certain that they were imposed upon the Conservative areas of Brent so that it was they who suffered them.

The remaining issue in Brent is that it has arrears due to it of housing benefit moneys, and I hope that the Minister will reassure Brent councillors by telling them that they will get the £3 million owed to them in time for them to count that into the budget when they come to make it in a week or two. They are owed that money. It is Government money due to Brent. If they had the money, it might make all the difference to their ability to meet the rate-capped limit.

The issue for Brent, as for other councils such as Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich and Lewisham, is not at its most acute this year. It is probable that in all the south London Labour boroughs the rate-capped limit can be met this year without cuts in services, and honest members of the Labour majority groups in those councils would admit that if they were asked. The problem lies in future years. Once they have raided their balances this year, there is no more money for future years. If the Secretary of State continues rate capping, tightens the screw and extends his grip on local authorities, they will be in severe difficulties and they will not be able to do other than what I presume he wishes, which is to cut the services that local people say in every opinion poll that they want to be sustained or increased.

If the Minister's policies require them, does he believe that reductions in real services are acceptable? Is he prepared to say to the electors of the rate-capped boroughs, "We honestly believe that you must have fewer day centres for the elderly, less sheltered accommodation for the elderly, fewer home helps and a less adequate standard of education"?

The Government have never revealed the amount of money that local authorities need to carry out their statutory responsibilities when, for example, in a borough such as Southwark it is clear that many old people need sheltered accommodation and need to be in proper homes for their old age and are not permitted that. What is the logic when rate capping is applied to such districts as Basildon and Thamesdown? They have one feature in common. They are expanding towns. They have grown because they have been successful. They have special needs, and the Government show no sign of having recognised those needs in what they have done.

Perhaps the borough that will suffer worst is Hackney. I do not think that anyone could say with logic that the

borough of Hackney, even with the rate-capped figures adjusted, will be able to make ends meet. Will the Government have to come to its rescue with "funny" money? Will they increase its urban aid? They will have to do something. There is a limit beyond which no authority and no councillor of any party is prepared to go, as Conservative members of ILEA will tell the Minister. Of all the rate-capped authorities listed in the order, the borough of Hackney is the one that I hope the right hon. Gentleman will accept has a problem that his order will not begin to allow it to resolve.

Mr. Hayes: I accept some of what the hon. Gentleman says about the difficulties in Hackney, but I am sure that he is aware that during the last three years Hackney has increased its staff by 28 per cent. and that that compares with a national average fall of 2 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: I shall come to that in a moment. Hackney has needs, and that should be the assessment. Services and needs should be the criteria, and not arbitrary Government-imposed targets.

One issue arising in Hackney has a common and underlying thread. Hackney council was taken to the High Court by the leader of the Liberal group not long ago for being secretive about its affairs. The court declared that councillors in opposition parties had a right to know. At the moment Sheffield council, another Labour rate-capped council, is refusing to divulge its figures, calculations and documents to the opposition parties in Sheffield. There is a right to know. But if there is a right to know in local authorities, which I hope that the Government will accept should be the case because in all these, bar one, the Conservatives are the opposition, there has to be a right to know in central Government, too. It cannot be said that local authorities must give up their secrets while the Government conceal theirs. Secrecy centrally breeds secrecy locally, and both are equally unacceptable.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): When the hon. Gentleman talks about having the right to know, will he say what Liberal policy would be in a similar situation?

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Interventions seem to be going rather wide of the subject of the debate. A great number of hon. Members are waiting to take part in the debate. We are dealing with a specific order, and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) must keep to that.

Mr. Hughes: The answer to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) is simple. Members of local authorities and the public need to know the figures——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting away from the order. He should not be answering such interventions.

Mr. Hughes: They need to know the figures on which calculations are based.

I must warn the Labour party against its blustering dishonesty. It knows that in many cases Labour authorities could meet the rate limits, but it will not admit it. It also knows that it is completely divided. One has only to look at any number of journals to know that that is the case. A fortnight ago, *Labour Weekly* quoted the Birmingham conference. It said:

> "Stay in office and fight is Kinnock's message."

Labour authorities were told by their leader to keep within the law. Last Saturday, however, we read that the deputy leader of the GLC had called on the 10 rate-capped Labour councils

> " to throw themselves into the struggle against the Government by opening up a 'second front' in support of the miners,"

and regarded anyone who did not vote for a no-rate policy on 7 March as betraying the Labour cause.

Labour party members cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): They would need to join the Liberals for that.

Mr. Corbyn: What is Liberal policy?

Mr. Hughes: The Liberals are consistent on this. It is the Labour party which, by its inconsistency and dishonesty, is doing local government a grave disservice. But it is the only way that it can see to respond to an increasingly dominant Government. For every step that the Government take to try to interfere in local authorities, they are encouraging local councils to try to get round the law. By every movement that they make, by every order that they table and every day that they come to the House, imposing central Government and their arithmetic on local councils, they are causing the problems of local democracy.

The ratepayers of many of the 13 authorities are being done a disservice by the dishonesty of their councillors. They are being done a greater disservice by the dishonesty and interference of the Government, who should never have got themselves engaged in this in the first place.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order in a debate about rate capping for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to claim that local councillors are dishonest?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He is responsible for his own speech.

5.39 pm

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is no longer in the Chamber because, unfortunately, I had to leave briefly during his speech, to most of which I listened with great interest. I respect his opinions, and I, too, regret that we still have rates, which I agree are unjust and unfair. However, I do not agree with my hon. Friend's conclusions, because we live with rates, and my constituents in Streatham have to live with rates in Lambeth.

Rate capping was one of the planks of my election addresses during the general election in 1983. At all the public meetings that I held I spoke about rate capping and the abolition of the Greater London council. Despite redistribution which introduced a largely Labour ward—Brixton, which I value greatly, although not many people in Brixton, I suspect, vote for me—I obtained the largest majority ever in Streatham. Therefore, although the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who opened the debate for the Opposition, spoke with much fire and great verbiage, he does not know my part of the world.

Lambeth ratepayers widely, deeply and strongly welcome this rate-capping order. The reason is simple. The charge that I have previously laid against Lambeth, and which I lay again now, is that it is spendthrift and

[Mr. William Shelton]

extravagant. Its management is plainly bad. I am referring not to the officials but to the elected representatives. They are plain bad managers. There is also a touch of the loony Left in Lambeth which costs so much and depresses most of us.

My first charge is that Lambeth is spendthrift and extravagant. Its current rate is 122p in the pound. By chance, a fine, Conservative borough, Wandsworth, lies alongside Lambeth. Wandsworth is similar to Lambeth in terms of population and deprivation. However, Wandsworth's rate is 26p in the pound. Rates in Lambeth during the last five years have increased by over 200 per cent.—in fact, by precisely 236 per cent., or four times the rate of inflation. Hon. Members may cry, "Ah, yes, but have not people flooded into this wonderful borough to enjoy the benefits of high rates?" In fact, the reverse is true. The population has decreased by about 10 per cent. in the last five years. So why does Lambeth have this extraordinarily high expenditure?

My second charge is that it is the result of plain bad management.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I hope that the hon. Member will agree that, perhaps unwittingly, he is confusing two issues. A few moments ago he referred to an increase in rates and then to an increase in expenditure. Does not the hon. Member recognise that the increase in rates is unrelated, or very little related, to the increase in expenditure? The increase in rates results partly from the withdrawal of rate support grant and very largely from the imposition of penalties. The hon. Member is simply not comparing like with like when he refers in the same breath to increased expenditure and increased rates.

Mr. Shelton: If the hon. Gentleman will be a little more patient, he will find that I am dealing basically with expenditure. However, I accept the point that he has made. Nevertheless, he will accept that during the last five years Lambeth rates have gone up in an extraordinary way. That was the case even before the Labour Government began to reduce the level of support from central Government.

I return to my second charge, that of plain bad management. Those who live in Lambeth expect the council to provide certain essential services — for example, street cleaning, refuse collection and street lighting. The amount of money spent by Lambeth upon these essential services has increased during the last few years but at less than the rate of inflation and at less than the level of rate increase. I have received a considerable number of letters from people in Lambeth, as no doubt has the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), complaining that, during the recent cold weather, no gritting took place. Therefore, the basic needs of those who live in Lambeth are not being especially well looked after.

To give a few random examples, in Lambeth there are many council properties and last year about £19 million was spent upon repairs to council properties. One could say that that is a great deal of money, but just over £10 million was spent on labour and materials while £8·3 million was spent on administration and overheads. In other words, 44 per cent. of the £19 million that was spent upon repairs to council properties was swallowed up by administration and overheads—plain bad management.

Lambeth employs over 9,000 people to collect refuse, or 40 employees per thousand population. Wandsworth employs just over 5,000 people to collect refuse, or 24 employees per thousand. The streets of Wandsworth are as clean as, if not cleaner than, the streets of Lambeth.

It is well known that there is a great need for housing in the inner cities. The waiting list in Lambeth is supposed to be 13,000 families, but Lambeth has 3,500 empty houses, of which nearly 1,000 have been empty for 12 months or more. Wandsworth has 87 houses that have been empty for 12 months of more. Those 3,500 empty houses in Lambeth could accommodate 8,000 to 10,000 people who would then pay rates. This would reduce the rate burden on the other ratepayers.

Rent arrears are a scandal in several inner London boroughs, not least in Lambeth. In Lambeth they amount to over £11 million, of which over £8 million is due from current tenants. In Wandsworth, just over £3 million is owing from current tenants. There are 2,700 tenants in Lambeth who owe £1,000 each or more. How could a well-managed housing department allow tenants to run up bills of over £1,000? It will be difficult for those tenants to pay off their rent arrears. I understand that in Lambeth rent arrears amount to over 17 per cent. of the total rent bill, whereas in Wandsworth they amount to just over 5 per cent.

I shall weary the House with only two more examples. Lambeth employs 10,000 people and Wandsworth 6,000. There has been a 60 per cent. increase in Lambeth's employees during the last 10 years, although the population fell by 20 per cent. during that period. A study has also been made of the take-up of library, swimming pool and day nursery services in Wandsworth and Lambeth. There is little difference in the services provided by the two boroughs, despite the fact that Wandsworth spends very much less per head of population, in real terms, on its amenities than Lambeth. On the whole, the take-up in Wandsworth is slightly higher. More books are borrowed in Wandsworth than in Lambeth, if that is any indication of anything other than that Wandsworth has libraries and that the people of Wandsworth borrow books from their libraries. Of course, the libraries are paid for out of the rates.

My third charge relates to the not very amiable aspect of what has come to be known as the hard Left. It can best be summed up as showing complete contempt for the ordinary citizen and for the voter, matched by a triviality of mind when one considers some of the extraordinary things that have occurred in Lambeth. But they are not all extraordinary.

One of the most damaging instances is the many thousands of pounds that Lambeth council has spent upon setting up a police monitoring unit. One might ask: why should Lambeth not have a police monitoring unit? I suppose Lambeth can have such a unit if the poor ratepayers pay for it, but I would remind the House that a police-community consultative committee was set up in Lambeth as a result of the recommendations of Lord Scarman. During the last two years it has been extraordinarily successful, although it has not found favour with the local council. I do not know why. I suspect that it is because it is not working towards the control of the police by the local council. Although this excellent consultative body exists in Lambeth, Lambeth goes off in a fit of pique, jealousy, stupidity or whatever it may be and spends many tens of thousands of pounds upon setting up its own police monitoring unit.

I said that the council showed a triviality of mind. It can perhaps spend £300 on anti-rate-capping tee shirts, but why should that £300 come out of the housing account when there is not enough money for housing anyway? I am told that Lambeth has sent out about 2,000 letters brusquely telling many of my constituents that their housing improvement grants have been denied them, despite the fact that they were applied for two or three years ago. They have been told that the Government have denied the council the additional £77 million that it needed. That £77 million is a figment of the council's imagination. Last year it received about £40 million and it put in a claim for well over £100 million. It got £34 million and then said that it had lost £77 million. I am surprised that it did not apply for £200 million and then say that it had lost £130 million. Yet out of that housing account £300 has been found for anti-rate-capping tee shirts. It is extraordinary, trivial and stupid. It shows the contempt that the council has for my unfortunate constituents who have the misfortune to live in what is a wonderful borough with a wretched council.

Mr. John Fraser: I hope, for the sake of accuracy, that the hon. Gentleman will concede that the reason why repair and improvement grants in Lambeth have been cut, to the immense distress of many residents there, is that the Government, on capital account, cut the housing investment programme from about £40 million to about £34 million. That is a £6 million cut in one year, which is completely unacceptable and has nothing whatever to do with rates. It has caused immense hardship to many owner-occupiers.

Mr. Shelton: Yes, those were the figures that I gave. There was a cut, but not a cut that would justify a letter going to over 2,000 of my constituents and those of the hon. Gentleman brusquely saying that a grant that they had applied for two or three years ago, which should have been granted one or two years ago, had been arbitrarily cut.

Let me look at Lambeth's expenditure over the years and relate it to the rate-capping proposals of this excellent Government. In 1981-82, Lambeth spent just over £100 million — £106 million. I am talking strictly about expenditure. In 1982-83, it spent £93 million. We ask ourselves what could have happened. The answer is that the Conservatives were in power for six months and cut the rate. Then the Labour administration returned. In 1983-84, Lambeth spent over £100 million — £104 million — and in 1984-85, £114 million. I understand that the budget that it has put in for next year is about £131 million.

After rate capping, instead of Lambeth getting the £130·8 million that it wants, it appears that it will receive £113·5 million — a cut of some £16·3 million. That would be a severe cut for an area such as Lambeth with so many problems. It would be for Wandsworth, too, which also has inner-city problems.

However, I can reassure the House that reality is not always what it immediately appears to be. In the 1984-85 budget of £114 million, some £17 million has been underspent. The rumour is going around that Lambeth council is looking for every way possible to spend that £17 million in these few weeks. Even so, it will probably fail to achieve that.

If the major part of that £17 million remains unspent, the rate-capped budget for next year of £113·5 million will be just about the same in real terms as the budget for this year. I remind the House of the catalogue of extravagances that has been going on this year and in previous years.

Therefore, I tell the people of Lambeth and its council that there is no reason why any services should be cut or why any people should be fired. The council can continue as it has been doing. However, I hope that it does not. I hope that it gives much better value for money. I hope that the people of Lambeth will have what they deserve — good value for money and a council which thinks not of ideological advantage but of serving the ratepayers who pay the rates.

I support the order in full. I supported the Government's policy during the 1983 election and I have supported it ever since. To the best of my belief, the great majority of my constituents also support it strongly.

5.55 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Sheffield city council rejects the Government's case put by the Secretary of State today. It believes that his guidelines are inaccurate, based on outdated information, unpredictable and inconsistent. Therefore, it regards tham as inadequate as a basis for deciding that a local authority should be deprived of so much of its financial and operational independence.

Is it not extraordinary and disturbing from the point of view of the constitution and local democracy that the councillors in the majority group in Sheffield and their colleagues in the district Labour party should be considering the budget today while the Secretary of State is determining the rate? Decisions that should be taken together, although the council will not formally consider the budget until 7 March, are being taken by different people in different places.

The Secretary of State has refused before today's debate to set out the assumptions that have been made in making the provisional rate limit. However, it is clear that he has taken no account of recent trends in pay negotiations and interest rates which, on the basis of Sheffield's forecast, would imply further savings of £3 million to keep within the limit that has been set. Alternatively, an adjustment to the rate limit to allow a higher level of expenditure would imply a rate increase of 5 to 10 per cent.

Within the overall reduction of the rate support grant, Sheffield has suffered disproportionately. Its entitlement for 1985-86 is £92·6 million, a reduction of £10 million in real terms on the 1984-85 entitlement. Moreover, Sheffield's grant-related expenditure assessment at £187·1 million leaves the city with a 3·5 per cent. increase compared with the national increase of 6·7 per cent.

Sheffield's designated rate limit for 1985-86 is 207·1p in the pound, a reduction of 1p or 0·5 per cent. on the 1984-85 rate. The expenditure limit, set at £218 million, will leave the city with an expenditure gap of at least £31 million on a standstill budget of £249 million for 1985-86. Allowing for the use of some reserves, say, £11·8 million, that figure could be reduced to £19·2 million, an amount which cannot be financed from further rate increases and which therefore implies large job losses and cuts in services.

Virtually no account has been taken by the Secretary of State of the fact that the same level of reserves will not be available to reduce spending next year. That disregard of the financial position of Sheffield city council doubles the amount of cuts required.

[Mr. A. E. P. Duffy]

Moreover, by forcing councils to exhaust their reserves to meet this year's limits, the Secretary of State will find that they have no rainy day savings left when he sets his second round of limits for 1986-87. At that point, he will either have to take personal responsibility for large and unpopular cuts in local government services or scrap the grant penalty system and increase the rate subsidy paid by the Government, which would defeat the whole point of rate capping.

Cuts of the magnitude that the Secretary of State is seeking are simply not achievable in a single year without decimating services in areas that are predominantly the responsibility of deprived, inner-city authorities. Those are areas in which the impact of the Government's policies, particularly on unemployment, is most deeply felt and where local authority services that are now under threat often provide the only safety net. Yet the Secretary of State ignored those implications and certain consequences of his policies in his opening speech.

Sheffield city council has recently conducted an exercise to estimate the sort of damage that will be done to services if no further financial concessions are given by the Government. It assumes a cut of 5 per cent. Let me offer some examples of the likely effect of such a cut on jobs and services.

A 5 per cent. cut in the education service would almost certainly mean a reduction in the number of teachers, on top of recent reductions, a reduction in the number of non-teaching staff and in the number of cleaning staff, and a reduction in the school meals service and in the library service.

The assessments have provided numbers for the city council, but I do not want to spell out those numbers, because I do not wish to cause unnecessary alarm. I think that I have shown what profound effect a 5 per cent. cut would have on the education service in Sheffield.

On recreation, a 5 per cent. cut would almost certainly mean the closure of all community-used buildings outside normal hours, the closure of sports halls for at least one day a week—and severely reduced weekend opening—a reduction in park maintenance and a loss of jobs.

A 5 per cent. reduction in family and community services would almost certainly mean a reduction in the capacity of old people's homes and day centres, a loss of home helps and home wardens, a severe reduction in the meals-on-wheels service and a reduction in provision of day centres for the disabled and day centres and residential care for the mentally handicapped. In contrast to such cuts in services, the "Community Inquiry" held recently in Sheffield received evidence from more than 300 voluntary groups about the need for increased spending and improvements to services.

More than 70 tenants' associations in the city put together a report whose main findings revealed that the city has suffered a real cut in its housing borrowing capacity from £49·4 million in 1977-78 to £19·1 million in 1985-86; that of the 85,000 households on some form of benefit in the city, 55,000 are council tenants; that more than 30,000 households and/or individuals are on the waiting list for council accommodation; and that in the council sector, 30,000 tenants live in inter-war houses needing modernisation. One tenants' association said:

"Old people are living and dying in damp, cold conditions worse than those their fore-fathers faced."

The report concludes:

"It seems that only Government is blind to the Great British Housing Disaster that it is rapidly creating . . . All our services should be increased, not cut. We need a massive rebuilding, retraining and rehousing programme, not cuts."

The report presented by the Pensioners Action Group highlighted a declining standard of living for most pensioners. Its main findings were that 77·2 per cent. of respondents believed that their standard of living was worse than five years ago and that the most desperately needed services were the home help and home warden services, which are under-resourced.

Finally, in the area of established need, the Sheffield Advice Centres Group co-ordinated findings from the city's advice and community centres. Its main conclusions were that half of all Sheffield households already depend on some form of state benefit and as many as two thirds may be entitled to do so, that one third of all Sheffield households are living at or below supplementary benefit levels, that the city loses an average of £40 million from the Government in unpaid benefit and that the most effective way of reducing that figure would be to establish more neighbourhood advice centres and that, between them, unemployed and elderly people account for 80 per cent. of those seeking help from advice centres. Unemployment in the city has trebled since 1979 and one in five of the population is now a pensioner, one third of whom are over 75.

Clearly, the possible effects on services and jobs in Sheffield of the financial limitations and loss of democratic control that will result from the order that is being pushed through today are unprecedented. Yet the city of Sheffield, singled out for insult by the Secretary of State earlier today, has been singled out for praise by the Audit Commission.

Sheffield city council has no choice but to resist. Because it believes that the Secretary of State is using grant-related expenditure assessments that are based on "completely wrong assumptions and data", it is considering challenging the "reasonableness" of the assessment in court. It is also considering taking further legal action over the way in which the Government are seeking to push the draft order through Parliament.

6.7 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): When I arrive at the gates in the next world and am asked what burdens I bore in this world, I shall be able to say that I paid rates not only in Camden, but in Leicester. Therefore, I declare not one interest, but two. However, my support for the order rests not on the effect that it might have on my pocket, but on my belief that it is unequivocally in the interests of my constituents.

I speak as a former councillor of the London borough of Camden who reported 26 Labour councillors to the district auditor and set in train the case of Pickwell v. London borough of Camden, which is to be found in the law reports. I give Labour councillors on Leicester city council who are minded to act unlawfully fair warning that I know the ropes when dealing with the district auditor and that I am in daily contact with him.

I believe that when the history of the last 10 or 15 years of local government is written, commentators will say that the Government have acted not only reasonably, but with great caution, and that if there is any criticism it is perhaps that they might have acted sooner.

It is interesting to note the response from various councils throughout the country. Recently, Councillor Phil Turner, who was leader of the Labour group when I served on Camden council, was asked about his new group's view on a civil defence circular sent to the council. In those well-chosen words for which he is so well known, he said,

"Well the group hasn't discussed it yet, but I'm quite confident that when we get round to it, our response to the Government will be 'get stuffed'."

There are many adherents of the "get stuffed" school of local government, and they have their supporters on the Opposition Benches.

If we travel up the M1 to Councillor Turner's counterpart on Leicester city council, we find the bewhiskered figure of Councillor Peter Soulsby. According to the *Labour Herald* of 1 February, he said:

"The group is firmly committed to non-compliance".

Time alone will tell whether that firm commitment to non-compliance is as strong now, after taking a short trip to Birmingham a few days later, and listening to the Leader of the Opposition, as it was on 1 February. But my experience of five years on Camden council and two years in Leicester tells me that rate-capping is an absolute necessity.

The local government beast will not respond to sticks and carrots. If it did, its response to the system of targets and penalties would have been much more effective than it has been. But over the past four years, Leicester has forfeited about £5 million in grant because it has knowingly and wilfully spent over target. No sane council would indulge in such activity. The lesson is plain. If the local government beast will not respond to sticks and carrots, it must be tethered, otherwise it will run amok.

One need look only at Leicester's spending over the past few years to find ample justification for its inclusion in the order. Let us compare its rate poundage with that of similar cities in the midlands. In Derby the rate in the pound stands at 21p, in Nottingham at 23p and in Leicester at 37·5p. Yet Leicester is a second tier district council that has none of the big spending departments of local government. It is not an education, social services or police authority, and it does not have to finance a fire brigade.

When I went to a council meeting in Leicester as a spectator, the first thing that I noticed was its comparatively exiguous commitments compared with those of Camden. The meeting was over in about an hour and a half and we were out in the bright evening sunlight of Leicester. Yet as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) will confirm, Camden could continue its meetings until 2am or 3am. Indeed, that was nothing out of the ordinary for it, and it gave us a very suitable training for the House.

Therefore, given Leicester's commitments, there is no justification for the spending that it has indulged in during the past few years. In the current year, its gross expenditure is £99 million. That is almost one tenth of £1 billion for a place like Leicester. Its income is £38 million. That leaves about £60 million to be found from other sources. It obtains about £38 million of that from rate support grant and from specific Government grants. It gets about £2·5 million from its very ample reserves, £4·7 million from agency reimbursements and £14·6 million from ratepayers. Those figures demonstrate the sort of problems facing local government.

First, the taxpayer makes a massive contribution to the council's budget, which amounts this year to about £38·8 million. Secondly, hon. Members should bear in mind the massive amount that was taken this year from Leicester's reserves. Did that deplete its reserves? Not at all. Its reserves on the general rate fund for this year are £5·5 million. It has five other accounts in which there are reserves. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have been failing in his duty if he had not had regard to the quite disproportionate figures that are unashamedly shown in the city council's annual reports and budgets. They are there for all to see, and there is no mystery about them. If the hon. Member for Blackburn, (Mr. Straw) is flummoxed about where the figures come from, I should be only too happy to supply him with copies of the relevent documents so that he can see for himself.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): If the figures are so readily available, why does the Secretary of State refuse to give the basis upon which he has made, and then reduced, his assessments?

Mr. Spencer: There is no point in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State repeating something that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) will know, if he has taken the trouble to open the annual reports and budgets. The figures are there in black and white. There is no point in involving my right hon. friend in this toing and froing, and in what Councillor Soulsby says is a game. Councillor Soulsby may think that it is a game, but the ratepayers of Leicester, South who pay the unconscionable rates levied by Leicester city council do not think that it is much of one. As far as they are concerned, it has gone on for far too long and must come to a halt.

Therefore, Leicester's excessive spending certainly qualifies it for rate capping at the level included in the order. If one looks at the budget accounts a little more closely—since my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West asked how the figures are reached——

Mr. Janner: I am not the hon. and learned Gentleman's friend but his opponent.

Mr. Spencer: The planning committee in Leicester will spend £3·2 million in the current year. That is twice the expenditure of the planning committees in Nottingham and Derby. Leicester's expenditure on play centres, leisure and swimming pools is about three times that of any comparable city.

Mr. Janner: Why?

Mr. Spencer: The hon. and learned Gentleman can always look at the Audit Commission's profile on Leicester. If he is not satisfied with the figures in the budget, he can go somewhere else, but he will find that the figures are confirmed.

Thus it is not surprising that, if left to its own devices, the city council would have gone on to even greater excesses next year. A draft budget was handed to me only a short time ago showing that it was contemplating a net expenditure of £32 million in the coming year. If that had been allowed to go through, the rates for next year would have been doubled to approximately 70p in the pound. When people in Leicester ask, "What is this order saving us from?" the answer in a sentence is, "It is saving you from having your rates doubled".

[Mr. Spencer]

The most recent draft budget that has fallen into my hands shows that Leicester is planning to spend, if left to its own devices, about £30·2 million. That would give rise to an increase of approximately 70 per cent. in the rate next year. We are very grateful that we shall be saved from that fate.

The rate support grant for Leicester is being put up from £10 million this year to £12·4 million next year—a £2·4 million increase. That completely lays to rest the bogus argument that has been peddled by Opposition Members that somehow the rate support grant will force rates up. It is very generous to Leicester, having regard to its absurdly high expenditure in the past. It is very generous in regard to the gross expenditure of £99·1 million and the amount that Leicester has in its reserves.

The effect of the order, if it goes through the House, will be to reduce the rates next year from the current £14·6 million to £10 million—a £4·6 million reduction, as against a £2·4 million increase in the rate support grant. Against that background, the city council still has over £5·5 million in the reserves, so what is the problem? This is not, as the rate-capping campaign would have the citizens of Leicester believe, an attack upon everybody who takes advantage of the city's services. It does not mean, as the rate-capping campaign shamefacedly contends, that everybody will be hurt if the order goes through. As seen by any fair-minded person, the figures clearly demonstrate that we are trimming budgets back by a sensible and realistic margin; we are not in the business of destroying services.

Recently there arrived in my postbag, in a buff envelope, an enclosure from some well-wisher in the council. The envelope contained a single document—the first report of the officer implementation group of the rate-capping campaign. It was dated 8 October 1984 and paragraph 3 said:

"The campaign will have no credibility without support of council work force and the voluntary bodies the council finance to provide services and employ people".

So that internal report was admitting that, without the support of the voluntary sector and the staff that it employs, the anti-rate-capping campaign would be seen by the public as the confidence trick that it obviously is.

The report goes on to say that there had been set up a joint union co-ordinating committee, and that

"the city council has agreed full-time secondment for certain trade union representatives to work on this".

The report further says that

"This aspect is working well".

It is hardly surprising that it is working well if staff are being seconded to do the work.

The report goes on to speak of the voluntary sector in not quite such complimentary terms. It says:

"The voluntary sector have been more difficult to contact. 'Get going'."

More work to be done.

We now see what lies at the back of the scaremongering campaign. It has not brought to my surgery many members of the public. The two principal classes of people who have come are staff and those associated with the voluntary groups. They have come as a result of the campaign set up by the city council.

The voluntary sector has been manipulated in the most disgraceful way. Its fears have been stirred up without the slightest justification. I will tell the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West why there is not the slightest need for what has been done. The expenditure on the anti-rate-capping campaign is being provided by the 2p rate — the section 137 expenditure. In Leicester that amounts to £800,000.

A few days ago I received from the chief executive a copy of a letter which he had sent to the permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment complaining that the city's section 137 resources were inadequate to fund the inner area programme, which is the jewel of our crown in Leicester, paid for by the taxpayer as to three quarters and by the council as to one quarter. Last year it totalled about £5·4 million. Therefore, of that sum three quarters was paid by the taxpayer and one quarter—£1·8 million—by the council. Taking away the 2p rate, it means that not much more than £1 million is Leicester's contribution to the inner area programme. That is very modest expenditure. Yet the chief executive told the Department of the Environment that the whole of the inner area programme was being threatened because of the effect of rate capping, and especially the effect of section 137 expenditure.

If the city council can spend its money under section 137 on the anti-rate-capping campaign, it follows as night follows day that it will not have available the same money to spend on the inner area programme. The budget for the anti-rate-capping campaign is £45,000 but, as the district auditor has pointed out to the city council, he is not letting the council get away with that. He will take into account the amount of officer time which, as the officer implementation group report shows, is considerable.

The cost of the anti-rate capping campaign has not been worked out. I should not be surprised if it is well over £100,000. If the city council is sincere about subscribing to and promoting the welfare of the city in the inner area programme, how much better occupied it would have been had it ensured that the section 137 contribution to the programme was maintained and not diverted into that absurd campaign.

I wish to say a few words about the effect that the order will have on jobs. The Opposition argue that rates have no effect on jobs. That is much like saying that there is no such thing as an uneconomic pit. If hon. Members go to those sectors that have been especially hard hit in Leicester by Third world imports such as textiles, footwear and knitwear, where some companies have found it difficult to keep their heads above water, and where profit margins have virtually disappeared, they will understand that 0·5 per cent. may mean the difference between survival and extinction. There are unemployed people in my constituency who have learned that lesson only too well. The blame for that occurring rests squarely on the shoulders of those in the town hall. If we pass this order tonight, which I hope we will, that state of affairs—thank goodness—will come to an end.

6.32 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I must leave my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Leicester and Camden to respond to the incredible speech of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer). I do not feel competent to comment on the figures that he produced, but if there were time to do so and if I would not bore the House, I could comment on his attitude to local government. His idea of local government being tethered is in direct opposition to the plea of his hon.

Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) who spoke in favour of the principle of local government, which has been eaten away by Government legislation since 1981.

Last week I suggested to the Leader of the House that it might make more sense to have a separate order for each local authority that the Government proposed to rate-cap. As I have listened to the debate, I have become persuaded that that might have been the sensible way to handle matters. This debate will, inevitably, be bitty. It is impossible to give due or proper attention to the problems of each local authority unless they are considered and debated separately.

During Second Reading of the Local Government, Planning and Land (No. 2) Bill I said that as a consequence of the interference in the activities of local councils, the House would find itself debating the minutiae of local council decisions. That is something on which the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South concentrated to some degree. It is profoundly disturbing that this House should find itself debating bits of expenditure—for example, £300 relating to teeshirts—which are more properly of local concern.

On 14 December I presented a petition to the House on behalf of more than 30,000 people of the London borough of Greenwich, objecting to the proposed rate capping of their council. Given more time, many more signatures could have been obtained. The proof of that lies in the findings of a MORI poll conducted last year, which showed that four out of five people in the borough were in favour of maintaining services at existing levels or improving them, even if that meant more rates and taxes. A more recent poll carried out by MORI in December 1984 showed that 70 per cent. in the borough thought that the Greenwich council should be responsible for deciding how much it should spend. The Government should be clear about one matter—what they are proposing in the order is in the teeth of the opposition of the great majority of people in Greenwich.

The Secretary of State responded to the petition on 28 January, justifying his decision to rate-cap Greenwich. He said:

"Some councils spend far more than others on providing the same services."

That might be his view of Greenwich, but it is not shared by his appointed Audit Commission. It refers to Greenwich as efficient and the council as providing a whole range of services at a smaller cost per head of the population than many non-rate-capped Tory London boroughs.

The right hon. Gentleman implied in his response that Greenwich should tackle waste and inefficiency, yet the Audit Commission says that it is an efficient council. Who is right? On what basis does the Secretary of State make his charge? Where is the evidence? Later in his response, the right hon. Gentleman describes Greenwich as:

"one of the highest spenders in the country."

He produces no evidence to support his claim, other than to say that in the current year Greenwich is planning to spend 4 per cent. above target and 20 per cent. above GREA. He says that GREAs take account of:

"the differing needs which councils have to meet in providing the services for which they are responsible."

No one who has examined the figures can believe that that is so. I do not believe that even the officials in the Department believe that that is so. It is an inequitable and very unjust system.

GREA is used as a reference point for the distribution of block grant. As a result of the system, the Government have filched £94·7 million of block grant from the people of Greenwich. The council has been forced to put up its rates. In a parliamentary answer, the Secretary of State told me that the increase in the rates was 112 per cent. —he said 113 per cent. this afternoon—since 1981-82. What he did not say was that he forced the council to put up the rates so that it could maintain its services and carry out its promises to the electorate. To hear the Secretary of State talk, anyone would think that Greenwich rates were the highest in London. They are lower than Kensington and Chelsea, Camden, Islington and Westminster, all of which have an average weekly rate payment of more than £13. Greenwich is the fourth lowest in the size of rates payments per week in London, with an average of £9·57.

The Audit Commission singles out Greenwich as one of the councils that give good value for money in the provision of services. Yet in a parliamentary answer on 11 December, the right hon. Gentleman said that Greenwich should run its services effectively and economically. I ask the House why he persists in slandering Greenwich council. He produces no evidence, and the evidence of the Audit Commission points in the opposite direction.

The Secretary of State expresses concern from time to time about the effect of rates on businesses. The Secretary of State for Employment opened a new Asda store recently in Greenwich. Asda decided to locate there despite the apparently swingeing rate bills that it would have to pay. A recent report showed that the business rates on commercial property are lower in at least seven rate-capped local authority areas in London than they are in a number of so-called low-spending authorities, and one of the authorities concerned is Greenwich.

There is no fairness or justice in the right hon. Gentleman's system. Greenwich council has persistently asked the Secretary of State on what basis he has acted. He will not say. Instead, he poses as the champion of the ratepayers of Greenwich, from whom he has filched a cool £95 million.

The right hon. Gentleman prates on about expenditure on police committees and so on and calls it nonsensical spending—as though it had anything to do with him—when the activities to which he objects constitute a minimal part of the budget of Greenwich. The right hon. Gentleman told me on 11 December that the Government would watch carefully where Greenwich made its savings. If Greenwich were to obey his diktat, it would have to sack 1,000 council employees, increase delays in all council services, increase council house rents, cut down on council house repairs, increase charges for the elderly and handicapped, reduce nursery places for the under-fives, cut back on home helps, provide fewer books in libraries, close swimming pools and sports centres, cut down on cleaning and refuse collection, cut grants to voluntary groups and small businesses and end training and apprenticeship schemes for school leavers.

That is what the Secretary of State is demanding, and he is demanding it of a borough in which a quarter of the population live in poverty, one in six cannot afford adequate heating, one in eight cannot afford new clothes, one in six are pensioners and one in 10 live with disabled

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or infirm people. No wonder the majority of people in the borough regard the right hon. Gentleman's behaviour as totally unreasonable.

The Secretary of State will not say on what basis he is acting. Is it any wonder that many councillors are deeply distrustful of him and his motives? They will not seek determination for the reasons which the leader of Portsmouth city council has given and which have been quoted today. If that is the way in which a Tory local authority leader thinks, can the House wonder at the suspicion and distrust of Greenwich council, which is Labour-controlled?

As I said on 11 December, when the RSG was announced, the Secretary of State's attitude is nothing short of unjust and vindictive. I go further. His behaviour is shameful because he is demanding that my council cuts its services and provision for the weakest, most disadvantaged and poverty-stricken members of the community. That has provoked the anger of thousands of people in my constituency and in the borough of Greenwich.

6.47 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): If there was one issue beyond all others which dominated the 1983 general election in the Dulwich constituency, it was the high burden of rates imposed on the residents there by the GLC, ILEA and Southwark council. Today's measure will be welcomed by the ratepayers of Southwark.

It is worth analysing the payments that are made. Only 28 per cent. of the residents of Southwark pay full rates. The remaining 72 per cent. are on some form of rent or rate or rent and rate rebate. It is the duty of every local authority to make sure that it is accountable to those who pay for its services and that the services it provides for all its residents are the best possible. Southwark council has singularly failed to do either.

Mr. Dobson: We have for long heard of the American concept of no taxation without representation. Does the Tory party have a variation—that of no representation without taxation?

Mr. Bowden: It is in fact taxation without representation because two thirds of the rates paid in Southwark are paid by commercial ratepayers. Although they pay two thirds of the total rates, they have no representation, and that is where the problem lies.

Our view is that the best possible services should be provided. Rate capping has provided a discipline which could and would work in Southwark if those who control the council had the will to make it work. The gap between the capped expenditure level and the proposed base budget is about £22 million.

The minority group on Southwark council has produced an alternative budget demonstrating the way in which that gap could be closed, and that scheme has been checked and discussed with officers of the council. The officers agree that, in the current year, the £22 million could be reduced by £10 million to £12 million by creative accounting. That could be done now. There would be opportunity in future to reduce that £12 million to £7 million on an ongoing basis.

A rent increase of around 7 per cent. would reduce that to £4 million and would, at the same time, reduce the rate burden on those paying rates in council accommodation by more than the rent increase, a point which has not previously been taken on board. If we wiped out the political boost which has been put into the housing maintenance account, of about £6 million, we could reach the rate-capped expenditure level this year without great hardship. I readily acknowledge that this year is one thing and the future is another. In the long term, we could have the opportunity to reduce expenditure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) spoke by way of comparison between the London borough of Wandsworth and Lambeth, and I will draw a similar comparison. In 1977-78, the rates in Wandsworth were greater than those in Southwark. However, let us consider what has occurred in the intervening eight years, when Wandsworth has had a Conservative cost-conscious council.

Today, the total rate payable in Southwark is 260p. The total rate payable in Wandsworth is 137p. The borough rate in Southwark is 149p, whereas in Wandsworth it is 26p.

Wandsworth has 1,688 empty dwellings, while Southwark has 4,281. Wandsworth has 24 dwellings containing squatters, whereas in Southwark there are 1,104 such dwellings. Wandsworth is £3 million in rent arrears whereas Southwark has arrears of £17 million. Wandsworth has 5,766 staff, while in Southwark the staffing is up to 8,988, and 1,000 new members of staff have been taken on since 1982.

Let us compare the delivery of services. The cost of refuse collection in Southwark is £21·16 per head, whereas in Wandsworth it is £8·71 per head. The cost of maintaining highways in Southwark—the roads are not noticeably better in Southwark than in Wandsworth—is £36 per head, whereas in Wandsworth it is £15 per head.

Across the whole range of services, there is an opportunity for cost-effective improvements to be made in the way in which those services are delivered. There is no doubt in the minds of most people that the extremely high cost of services in Southwark is not reflected in the services that are being delivered. It is evident that the amenities that are being provided in Wandsworth are as good as, if not better than, those provided by Southwark. There is clear evidence that Southwark is not delivering the goods and services that it should be delivering to its ratepayers at a cost they can afford.

The Labour administration of Southwark council opposes rate capping for political rather than financial reasons. When it initiated its rate-capping opposition last year, Southwark council obligingly displayed posters in the borough bearing my name and photograph along with my telephone number. It suggested that any ratepayers who were troubled by rate-capping should telephone me. The House will be interested to know that I did not receive one call from anyone concerned about rate-capping.

It is interesting also to note the attitude of political opposition and the turn that it is taking. Some of my constituents attend my advice surgeries with problems that are more properly dealt with by their borough councilor. I follow the procedure which is usually adopted by all hon. Members. I take the details and if it is a housing matter I write to the director of housing about it. I refer the matter also to the ward councillor concerned. I write to the effect that I am sure the ward councillor will want to follow up

the matter. This has been a reasonably satisfactory arrangement, inasmuch as something is sometimes done. More often than not, unfortunately, nothing is done.

Last week I wrote to the director of housing and referred the papers to the ward councillor. She replied to me in this tone:

"Dear Mr. Bowden, I am returning the information which you sent me. I cannot possibly act for a client who has contacted you, given that the policies of the Conservative Government are causing such havoc in Southwark. Our chronic housing shortage and inability to maintain our properties is directly due to the reduction in our HIP allowance, and withdrawal of rate support grant, as well as the abolition of the GLC, has made our job as councillors impossible. I suggest you explain this to people who contact you."

Indeed, I am explaining this to those who contact me. I am explaining that this councillor is, disgracefully, unwilling to do her job. I shall refer the letter of Councillor Helen Penn to the Committee of Privileges. I think that there is an intrusion in what Councillor Penn is doing——

Mr. Dobson: Do the job that you are paid to do.

Mr. Bowden: That advice is exactly that which I suggest Councillor Penn should take.

The capping of rates will improve services, or give the opportunity for services to be improved, for many of the organisations and businesses which pay heavy and high rates. It will increase the opportunity for employment. It will encourage those who are thinking of leaving the borough to remain. It will have an effect on Health Service provision. Excessive rates are being paid by Guy's hospital, King's College hospital and Dulwich hospital. The excessive rates that these hospitals pay should not be made available to Southwark council wantonly to squander. The moneys should be more properly used to provide acute medical services.

I support the order because I think that it will introduce a right and proper discipline and focus for Southwark council. At the same time, it will give the opportunity to deploy resources and improve services generally for all who live in Southwark.

6.54 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): It will be more appropriate for me to leave London Members to wipe the floor with the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). But as he has seen fit to associate himself, most dangerously, with the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) in suggesting that only those who pay rates should be entitled to accountability, it is right to say that I have always believed that councillors and Members of Parliament should be responsible and accountable to the electorate, and not merely those who have money.

The hon. Member for Dulwich said that in Southwark only about 32 per cent. of those living in the borough pay full rates. The obvious question is "Why?". The answer is that so many in the borough in which his constituency lies are not well enough off to be able to afford to pay full rates. Even under this Government's rules, they do not have to pay them. He should be ashamed of trying to take away still more of the resources that are needed by so many. His justification for wishing to do so was the same as that of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South. His argument is that those engaged in business and commerce would pay less rates.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South understands so little about Leicester, Leicester people and the way of life in the city. Even those engaged in commerce want to have their businesses in a city that is solvent. They do not want the city's reserves to be eaten up in the way that the Government require but which no sound business would tolerate. When I asked the Secretary of State on what he based his figures, his answer was pathetic. Now we are told by the hon. and learned member for Leicester, South that this has nothing to do with the Secretary of State. It is the Secretary of State who is responsible for these matters and he will bear the responsibility. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South argued that there was no point in involving the Secretary of State in the dispute. Let it be remembered that the Secretary of State created the dispute and has been personally involved in it from the start.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South said that he represented his constituents in supporting rate capping. He does not. It is obvious that he does not know the feelings of his own constituents. I shall speak for my constituents. They are the people who need the services which Leicester city council, which the hon. and learned Gentleman deplores, was elected and re-elected by ever growing majorities to provide. The hon. and learned Gentleman calls for reduced expenditure. Which expenditure? He has not answered that question. When he talks about the anti-rate-capping campaign and describes it as "absurd", he should realise that there is nothing absurd in providing the people with information about what the Government are doing. It is right that they should know what is to happen.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South talked about the profile of Leicester. He should understand that it includes almost 20 per cent. of the population who want jobs and are unable to find them. In one estate in my constituency about 60 per cent. of the residents are unemployed and looking for jobs. That is the profile of the city that matters to me. In that estate the council has been running a housing improvement programme so that people can have decent homes and the dignity of living in them. Unfortunately, that programme is now hit by cuts.

The hon. and learned Gentleman did not mention—perhaps he does not know—that about 20 per cent. of Leicester's population is Asian. Most of the Asians live in private housing. Much of that housing, whoever lives in it, is subject to improvement grants and they will be cut as well. The private sector will suffer along with the public sector.

Perhaps the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South does not appreciate the consequences of that for which he is arguing. Between 800 and 1,000 employees will be sacked by the council. When that happens they will ask, "What did you do to protect us or defend us?" The hon. and learned Gentleman will have to say, "I supported that which the Government are doing."

People are entitled to have homes and it is a fact that the construction industry is on its knees in Leicester. There are construction businesses in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency and they provide work as well as houses. They are being ruined by what is happening. The hon. and learned Gentleman should understand that both the private and public sectors are involved.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South talked about recreational facilities and asked why more money was being spent on them. In my constituency there is a new and vast estate called Beaumont Leys. It comprises private and public housing. It has been built by

[Mr. Greville Janner]

Conservative administrations as well as Labour ones and now it is being ruined by this Conservative Government. A great effort is being made to build and pay for a leisure centre so that the estate is not a desert as some of the old fashioned estates used to be.

When the time comes for swimming pools to be closed the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents will ask, "Why?" He will have to tell them that he supported the Government in a policy that led to the closing of pools. Swimming pools are used by the well-off as well as the disadvantaged.

I deplore the dividing of Leicester into the better off and the worse off. All citizens are entitled to local government services. They will all complain if refuse is not collected. Probably the first ones to complain will be those engaged in commerce. There will be general complaints that the streets are not lighted. The first to complain will be the articulate. We in this House should speak for the articulate but especially for those who are not able to speak for themselves.

Local government provides services from rat-catching and environmental health to planning, which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South deplores. When cuts take place the disadvantaged will suffer, but the suffering will not be confined to them. Of course, they will suffer the most—they always do.

How can the hon. and learned Gentleman talk in such terms about "a place like Leicester" with gross expenditure of £99 million. Does he really care about the city and those who live in it? It is not "a place like Leicester". It is a city which the hon. and learned Gentleman and I represent in part, and he should be advancing its interests in this place. It is those interests that are being damaged.

Of course the city council does not have to pay for education and social services because only a fraction of the rate collected is for the city. The rest is for the county. A Liberal Member who is no longer here saw fit to attack the Labour party. I say in his absence what I would have said in his presence. If his people had not put the Labour party out of office in the county, the county council might have been able to make good some of the damage to the city. By uniting with the Tories they showed what they really are—nothing more than Tories under another name.

On behalf of the people of Leicester—south, north, east and west — I suggest that the anti-rate-capping campaign is far from a confidence trick. The confidence trick is much more subtle. It is that this year the city council will be forced not just to take money from reserves and to keep the rates down, but just before the elections next year it will have to put the rates up even to meet the rate-capped limit. That is the confidence trick and it must be revealed now and at all times in the future.

As for "tethering the beast of democracy", anyone who has been a local authority councillor should defend the freedom of the local authorities of this country. They should not be tethered by the present movement of non-enlightened, non-benevolent central Government dictatorship which is taking over the powers, duties and moneys of local authorities. All who care about our cities and the people who live in them should oppose that.

The Secretary of State made petty, pathetic debating points, showing no understanding of the problems of the people of Leicester. His proposals are merely a continuation of swingeing cuts and wicked bungling. Since 1979 the people of Leicester have continued to elect the city council because it has done a first class, efficient and excellent job for the people of the city. It continues to employ people. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South talks about what is "uneconomic". Perhaps in his view it is uneconomic to provide services paid for by central Government and from rates.

Expenditure from rates has risen because central Government grant has been removed. The money has to come from somewhere. The inner area programme is desperately needed, but 25 per cent. of the cost will have to come from the city and with rate capping that will simply not be possible.

It is not just a matter of housing, roads, and lights or even of parks, the advice centres or of play centres, which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South recently said were not really necessary and for which he was rightly accused of heartlessness. There are also other civilised aspects of life which make a city sparkle, such as the marvellous efforts of the Haymarket and Phoenix theatres, both of which are now at risk. But for the Phoenix, Adrian Mole would never have emerged into the West End. I give an advance trailer that the cast will be coming to see the Minister for the Arts on Wednesday, when there will be a small performance at which all hon. Members will be welcome. It will be a matter of grim seriousness because we do not want to lose the theatre from which that play emerged, but I do not suppose that the Government will listen.

Hundreds of voluntary and statutory bodies, advice services, play groups, race relations bodies, street cleaning and refuse collection services, lighting, environmental health services, planning departments and concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled are now at risk. They will not all go, of course, because the council will fight to keep what it can. I should point out to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South, however, that even the well off if they are lucky get elderly and if they are not so lucky they get disabled. Those problems and the need for concessionary fares are shared by us all.

I do not intend to take even half the time that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South took as so many other hon. Members wish to speak. I merely make this plea to the Government, although they are no more listening in reality than they do in theory. Not one Minister is applying an ear to this. The radio station Leicester Sound asked me today by telephone whether I thought that the Government would listen to me. I said, "They may listen but they will not hear." I beg the Minister to understand that his proposals will cut away the rights, the services and the civilised decencies not just of the disadvantaged but of all citizens of a great city which was once so dignified and well off and is now being tethered by this awful Government.

7.5 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): In the battle of the Leicesters, I believe that the cool logic of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) carried the day against the rather emotional rhetoric of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), but I can scarcely be regarded as a neutral umpire.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), opening for the Opposition, said that these local authorities were important because, among other reasons, they spent

£1,200 million per year, and so they do. The basis for the order and for rate capping is that local authorities spend so much of our money. Control of inflation was the prime economic policy on which the Government were elected in 1979 and 1983, and the nub of that is the control of public expenditure, which must include local authority expenditure.

The rest of my remarks relate exclusively to the constituency of Billericay, two thirds of which is in the Basildon district council area. Rate limitation applies to councils which are budgeting to spend in the present financial year more than 20 per cent. above grant-related expenditure assessment, and more than 4 per cent. above target. The figures for Basildon are more than 70 per cent. and more than 17 per cent., so it is not a marginal case.

At the outset, I appeal to Labour councillors in Basildon to abide by the law—to seek to change it if they dislike it, but not to breach it. In the past three years the Labour-controlled council has increased its spending by almost a quarter—more than twice as much as prices have risen. The local rate has risen by one third, from 32·4p in the pound to 42·8p in the pound. In the same period, the average increase for district councils was less than 10 per cent.—from 19·5p in the pound to 21·3p in the pound.

Under the Government's proposals, the estimated net expenditure limit for the financial year 1985-86 is to be £13,662,000, equivalent to a 53·7p in the pound rate, allowing a block grant contribution of £878,000, equivalent to 3·46p in the pound. Thus the rate levy required would be about £12,784,000, equivalent to 50·33p in the pound, assuming nil balances, and that figure appears in the order today. If, however, net expenditure was fixed at £13,447,000, Basildon district council would attract an increase in Government grant of £390,000—a total of £1,268,000 or a 4·99p in the pound. The rate levy would be £12,179,000, or 47·95p in the pound. Therefore, a further cut in expenditure of £215,000 compared with that required by this order would attract additional Government grant of £390,000 and a saving of £600,000 to the ratepayers of the district. That is what the Conservative group on Basildon district council proposes, and that can be achieved without detriment to essential services. The limits in this order are maximums, not minimums.

Basildon district council estimates that it is being asked to save in the order of £1·5 million. That is not so. The total is about £600,000. The hon. Member for Blackburn mentioned the Audit Commission report, which clearly states that just on the administration of housing Basildon spends £600,000 more than any other comparable authority—£100 more on each house than the average council. The council also spends £180,000 on public relations and £120,000 on subsidising heating, which is not normally a local authority responsibility. It spends five times as much as its neighbours on concessionary fares, including cash grants for non-users, and way above the average on sport and recreation, even though its charges to users are way below average. All these points arise from the Audit Commission's report which the hon. Member for Blackburn was so keen to quote. That report identified expenditure totalling £4·7 million in areas in which Basildon district council spends more than the average council.

I do not believe that the savings which the Government are asking of that council are difficult to achieve. I would like to give the House an example of how it could save £100,000. It so happens that at present there are four vacancies on Basildon district council—public relations officer, political officer, deputy town manager and neighbourhood support services officer. The work done by those people could be spread among the other staff, and the saving on salaries and overheads would be of the order of £100,000. Instead, the council's Labour leadership has given the staff unions a pledge that there will be no redundancies from now until April 1986.

The House may also be aware that Basildon district council has been spending a lot of ratepayers' money on propaganda, some of which has no doubt landed in the waste paper baskets of hon. Members. A MORI public opinion poll was commissioned in Basildon, and with great glee the result was sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and myself. It was discussed at the council meeting on 14 February and a press conference was held on 11 February. Up to now, the district's Conservative councillors have not received a full copy of the report. This propaganda exercise was commissioned from part of a budget to Union Communications, to which Basildon district council has paid £60,000 to promote its view on rate capping.

That opinion poll was conducted between November and December 1984 and is, therefore, already out of date. A total of 689 people in Basildon were interviewed, of whom 106 were under the age of 25. I do not quibble about that at all, but I do quibble about the fact that some of them were aged 15, 16 and 17. This marvellous opinion poll did not ask a number of questions. For example, it did not ask whether any of these people interviewed was a ratepayer. In fact, the word "rates" is not mentioned in any of the questions. Those interviewed were not asked the obvious question—relevant to our debate—about whether they believe Basildon's rates to be too high, too low or just about right. That question was never put, because the council knew what the answer would be. Nothing was said about the rate level being so much in the pound or that the cost to ratepayers would be so much, whereas this order will limit the rates to 50·33p in the pound.

The leader of Basildon district council said in a letter to me dated 13 February:

> "You will see from the enclosed summary that the overwhelming majority (81 per cent.) of Basildon residents believe that Council, not the Government, should be responsible for determining levels of local spending".

However, he got the question wrong. The opinion poll asked who should be "mainly" responsible for deciding the level of spending on local authority services. In my view, the local authority should be mainly responsible, but there are overriding cases—the control of inflation is one—which allow Parliament and Government to act in the way that they have.

In the past, there was always a concordat between Government, Labour or Conservative, and local authorities, Labour or Conservative, on expenditure levels. That was broken by a few local authorities, which is why we are discussing this order tonight.

Despite this MORI poll and the propaganda exercise carried out in Basildon, Billericay and Wickford, the voting intentions of those who were interviewed showed that the Conservatives would get 30 per cent., Labour 27 per cent. and the Alliance 16 per cent. That clearly means that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and I would be re-elected at the next general election. I did not need an opinion poll on the rates to prove that.

[Mr. K. Harvey Proctor]

The local Labour leader is so happy with the state of affairs in the Basildon district council area that he is now pushing the local government Boundary Commission to consider a split whereby my constituents in Billericay and Wickford would separate from Basildon. Setting aside this opinion poll, he says that the majority of representations which he has received on the proposed split are overwhelmingly in favour of a division. One reason must be the high rates which Basildon levies and the fact that services are not good value for money.

Basildon district council assiduously propagates the psychological conditioning factor on my constituents that it is a "caring" council. It does not care for domestic ratepayers in Basildon, Billericay or Wickford, for the chap in business and industry who has to pay rates, for the wealth producers or the job producers. It does not care about the results of parliamentary elections when they go against its political colouring or about the truth, as the propaganda that it spreads shows.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and hon. Friends who are Ministers in the Department of the Environment care about election pledges and are prepared to honour them. On that basis I am prepared to support the order.

7.20 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): The hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) will not expect me to follow him into the wilds of Essex. Like him, I wish to concentrate my contribution on my constituents. I have listened to every speech, and the only hon. Gentleman who pontificated in an instant do-it-yourself way about the constituencies of other hon. Members was the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). When he talked to the three Liberals who sustain the Conservatives in my area, he took from them a great deal of erroneous information.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not present, but I welcome the Minister for Local Government. Although he is a little bit of a Left-winger, his star is rising, while that of the Secretary of State is sinking in the west. I am rarely unkind, but I accuse the Secretary of State of being absolutely callous towards the personal tragedies that this obnoxious, unjust order will cause to hundreds of my constituents in Brent.

Many hon. Members have spoken about their surgeries. In my surgery I see family life shattered by inner city deprivation. There is homelessness, and we face housing problems. I have to refer to the Marriage Guidance Council young couples whose marriages are breaking up because of homelessness or a lack of a place of their own. First, they move in with mother or mother-in-law and after a time they cannot hold the marriage together.

The proposals facing the social services department mean that the elderly will face death in a geriatric ward. There are inadequate social services to maintain them with dignity in their own homes. In Harlesden, 80 per cent. of the people have a Caribbean origin and in Alperton 56 per cent. are Asian. The Brent council must maintain its first-class record on racialism throughout its social services, educational and other provisions, and build a successful multiracial community, as it has been doing during the past three decades.

For 26 years I have dealt with housing problems at my surgery. At present, more than 1,000 people are in temporary accommodation. This week, 670 people are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. A visit was paid recently to three hotels, the Princes Square, Conway Court and Lion Court hotels, which we must use. The report lists the problems to be

"—Overcrowded and dangerous kitchen facilities
—Children climbing 5 flights of stairs to take the family meal to their parents' room
—Bitterly cold communal areas
—Dangerous electrical connections
—No taps in communal bathrooms or showers
—Damp conditions in shower units
—Fire doors jammed open and no clear Fire Exit markings."

It is an insult to a civilised society that 670 families are living in those conditions. The order will mean that the council will have to deal with more and more people in an inhumane and uncivilised way. At present, each family costs £1,800. At the present rate, we shall have bed-and breakfast accommodation for those people for at least the next three years. If this rate cut is persisted with, they may be there for much longer.

The tragedy of 20 years ago was the building of high-rise blocks. We call them concrete jungles. Six council estates in Brent urgently need to be refurbished. Security is needed. There is constant vandalism, harassment, and sexual assaults in the walkways, which need to be blocked off. Brent had to stop that programme because of lack of cash. There is a need for security at the entry to each of the blocks on the Stonebridge estate, where there is a large proportion of people from ethnic minorities. Assaults are not necessarily carried out on whites by blacks or vice versa, but often Asians are attacked by other minorities. Racial harassment is a problem, and many homeless families will be scared to return to places such as Chalkhill and Stonebridge, and will prefer the indignity of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The present wave of violence is there but the council's lack of money makes it unable to deal with the problems.

There are 16,000 names on the council waiting list—that is a crisis—and 4,000 applicants for transfers from high-rise blocks. Yet there were only six new housing starts in January 1985. With rate capping, there will be even fewer. Rate capping means that 20 per cent. of our present rate will be cut. Councillor Tom Bryson says:

"The Brent part of the total rate has been fixed by Patrick Jenkin at 196·42p (up by 1·5 per cent. only towards inflation, etc.) which means that even if Brent Council levied the maximum permitted rate, and precepting authorities acted as anticipated, we would have a 6 per cent. rise in rates but still only raise less than £100m towards a standstill budget figure of £174m."

He concludes by saying that the council will have an expenditure gap of about £30 million.

The position is aggravated by unemployment. Since 1979, the dole queue in Brent has increased fourfold. It was 4 per cent. and it is now 16 per cent. of the population. The consequence of unemployment is rent arrears, and the consequence of rent arrears is the council's difficulty to meet housing needs.

There has been increased pressure on social services. The straitjacket of this order is that social services must cut one area of responsibility to maintain the others.

I received an interesting letter from the Minister for Health about social services in Brent. In it he makes it absolutely clear that to contain expenditure in one area means to cut services in another. I received a letter

recently from one of the best general practitioners in my area, Dr. Ronald Law of Wrottesley road. He is in difficulties because his elderly geriatric patients whom he does not want to send to a geriatric ward cannot get adequate meals-on-wheels and home-help services. The council has had to trim those services during the past two years because of the cut in the rate support grant. Under the order, the rate support grant will be further cut and the elderly who depend on community services will suffer. The order cannot be passed without services to the elderly, the disabled and the needy being cut.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I have listened to the siren voices saying what will happen in my home town, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that this evening I spoke to the leader and the deputy leader of Brent council, both of whom assure me that all services will be maintained without a rates increase. There will be no cuts such as the hon. Gentleman described.

Mr. Pavitt: The hon. Gentleman served on Brent council and, as he says, it is his home town. However, I could give him chapter and verse of the figures. He will know that the budgets have been put forward at three public meetings. Despite what Councillor Lacey says, it is obvious that £30 million must be found. Mr. Lacey believes that he can find £16 million without much difficulty, but that still leaves £14 million to be found in the existing system. That was the point I made to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The officers clearly believe that, although there may be problems next year—I do not doubt that—this year, provided that the housing benefit grant of between £2 million and £3 million is repaid, they can produce a budget with no cuts. Obviously, that does not apply to next year.

Mr. Pavitt: Needless to say, I have had long conversations with Mr. Steed, the director of finance of Brent council. I also have the figures. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the council will be able to find some money, but there will still be cuts in housing and social services. A major disaster will occur next year when capital expenditure is cut. The Minister for Local Government gave me the figures. As Brent will pay 0·5 per cent. more for its capital borrowing, and as 75 per cent. of capital expenditure goes on housing, the taxpayers will have to pay an extra 0·5 per cent. I do not know whether the Minister intervened in the matter, but instead of having to wait until July, Brent will be able to borrow again in April. However, that does not alter the fact that rate capping will force the ratepayers to pay more.

The director of social services of Brent council states:

"Both our home care and meals on wheels have been reviewed in the last two years and both show serious deficiencies."

That is even before rate capping. She continues:

"The demand for social services provision continues to increase as a result of population, economic and social changes. At the same time there are cuts in related services such as the Health Authority. Due to increasing numbers, there is a need to give higher priority to services for both the elderly and the under-fives."

Last week, I received a deputation from the Treetops centre for the under-fives, which is likely to close in the near future.

The director of social services said that the council will "continue to pursue a variety of approaches to enable community care to be developed in place of institutional treatment. Within the department, the impact of a community care approach continues to involve changes in use of establishments, and a switch away from residential care towards community care."

As I told the House previously, the council propose to remove 60 people from Shenley hospital for the mentally ill and place them back into the community. This will prove extremely expensive for the community care services.

The director mentions the social implications of homelessness, and states:

"The department places a high priority on the need to ensure a more diversified service which is accessible and relevant to all ethnic groups."

I have studied carefully two recent reports on the needs of the elderly, and I shall quote from a letter about them:

"The conclusion of the first report concerned with Meals Services in Brent speaks for itself. To keep an ever-increasing number of elderly people in the community requires greater input. I am also attaching our October report, which implemented budget proposals for 1983-84, but still leaves us with a shortfall on outdated yardsticks for 1984-85. Next year I can see only a minimum being available."

May I ask the Minister to deal with two matters when he replies? First, what conversations took place between the officials of his Department and the leaders of Brent council, Bob Lacey, about the way in which the rate-capping limits were fixed? Was there any contact between his officials and Conservative party central office, which the right hon. Gentleman knows has been much involved in the affairs of Brent since 1983? Secondly, the Secretary of State talked about the help given to Lewisham by creative accounting. As the Minister knows, Brent also has a fine record of creative accounting. In fixing the rate, was consideration given to what has been done in that respect?

It is nonsense for the Secretary of State to grant urban aid status to the London borough of Brent with one hand and to rate-cap it with the other. The Tory and Liberal-controlled council has made drastic cuts today which are seed corn for tomorrow. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was interested in the three Liberals who are prepared to sustain Conservative control of the council, despite the fact that the Conservative party has one seat fewer than the Labour party. I do not believe that the Liberals will break with the Tories, but they must face the fact that they must find £14 million in addition to the £16 million which the Conservative leader believes that he can find without redundancies. If the council manages to do that, the public should know that the behind-the-scenes work of the Liberals will be sustaining this order.

The good news is that last week there was a by-election in a solid Tory ward, which produced a 15 per cent. swing to Labour. That means that Labour will take control at the next council election and that the three Liberals will lose their seats. At least we shall not have to listen to them in the council chamber, although we have no choice but to do so in the Chamber of the House of Commons.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I am proud and privileged to represent Basildon, which is in every sense a fine town. I greatly enjoy living there. I try to represent my constituents to the best of my ability, taking an interest in all matters and doing my best to promote the town. Alas, there is a thorn in my side—Labour-controlled Basildon district council. Since I made my maiden speech during the Second Reading debate on the Rates Act 1984, the council has accused me of stabbing the town and my constituents in the back. Far from that being the case, my

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wife has to examine my back every night for knife wounds inflicted by some Labour councillors' words of abuse. My Labour opponents locally have dubbed me a "yes man" and say that I spend all my time creeping and crawling round Westminster trying to get a job. If that was my motive, I have failed miserably.

I stand by the speech that I made during that Second Reading debate and by my suggestions for saving money without affecting services. I served on the Committee stage of the Rates Bill, and I believe that Ministers clearly won the argument for the principle of rates limitation, emphasising as they did the changing relationship between local and central government and the amount of money contributed by businesses and by the Government.

It came as no surprise to anyone when the Secretary of State, after drawing up the selection of criteria for limiting rates, found that Basildon district council—by anyone's standards a high-spending authority—met all of them. The local Labour party refused to accept that decision and launched what it described as a campaign to defend Basildon from the attacks made upon it by the Government. Yes, Basildonians, like the good eastenders they are, immediately barricaded their homes and began to build air raid shelters. Of course, the Labour authority did not help itself in readiness for the attack by having declared Basildon a nuclear-free zone.

In reality, the council's excitable reaction related to this rate limitation order. However, the Labour-controlled council launched the ultimate in a political propaganda war—not I might add that it was paid for through jumble sales or whist drives, but through sections 137 and 142. A public relations company called Union Communications was instructed to join the battle and to spend in so doing £146,000 of ratepayers' money. The political propaganda campaign has produced one almighty fiasco after another. Public meetings were held, supposedly to give information, but they were clearly biased. The only people attracted to those meetings were political activists and, at one meeting, the majority of the audience left after being informed, wrongly, that the meeting was to discuss the conservation of an open space.

Then the council asked for an Audit Commission report on the efficiency of its services. This well and truly backfired, having been launched in a blaze of expensive publicity, as it clearly showed that considerable savings could be made.

But the most remarkable piece of propaganda was produced by the council when it asked MORI to conduct an opinion poll on the provision of council services. I had no idea that this was being conducted, and I am sure that the Government did not either. Surprise, surprise, the findings of the poll arrived on my desk the Friday before last—of course the press had received copies already. The opinion poll is nearly three months old but had been sat on to try to embarrass us during today's debate.

This extraordinary opinion poll asked people whether they were satisfied with the provision of various services. It did not ask them whether they paid rates, whether they would be prepared to pay extra rates for the provision of services, or whether they voted in local elections. It did not ask them whether they understood which services were provided by the Government, which by Essex county council, which by the Basildon district council and which by the development corporation. It is a little surprising that an opinion poll comes to the conclusion that Basildon district council is the most popular district council in the country when the turnout in local elections is only 30 to 40 per cent.

It is a brave man who places credence upon opinion polls in Basildon. Not many people were predicting that a Conservative Member would be returned for the seat of Basildon in 1983. Four weeks before the general election, the local Labour party got 52 per cent. of the votes cast, and I lost my one and only Conservative district councillor. That left me without any Conservative district councillors or county councillors. The constituency was rated as 112th of the Labour seats that could be won by the Conservatives. However, when the count took place, it was found that I had achieved the biggest swing to the Conservative party in the country, and had become a Conservative Member of Parliament. Throughout the general election campaign, I constantly referred to the high spending of Basildon district council and to my support for rate-capping measures.

I am proud of the services in Basildon. People from all over the country write to me saying that they wish to settle in my constituency. However, through such magazines as the *Basildon Link*, many of my constituents have been deceived into believing that the council provides all these services. The truth is that by far and away the majority are provided by the Essex county council or the Government. The Labour-controlled council is expert at taking credit for things that it has not funded or initiated. For example, the *Basildon Link* constantly refers to home support services and home help services, but these services are provided by Essex county council. Basildon district council is publicity-mad. Unfortunately, Essex county council is publicity shy.

One of the most compelling arguments for supporting rates limitation in Basildon must be the present level of unemployment. There are far too many people without jobs. High rates destroy jobs. It is a pity that the MORI opinion poll did not ask the business community to comment on rates in Basildon. If it had, the clear response would have been that they are too high and that they destroy jobs. Only yesterday, one local business man urged me to support tonight's order, and called my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment St. Patrick.

The council had planned to spend £15·7 million in 1985-86, which would have meant a rate increase of 36·33 per cent., instead of the rate limitation being set at 17·59 per cent. Some of my constituents were a little surprised with even this high limit, but I appreciate that the council kept its rate artificially low last year—election year—by running down its rate fund balances.

I have received a letter from the leader of the council which informs me that the order will result in cuts in Basildon of £1·5 million. This is yet another in the long line of myths perpetuated by the propaganda machine. The truth is that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is asking for only the relatively modest saving of £600,000. Many sensible sectors for savings can be found, and many of them are contained in the Audit Commission report.

The cut for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked represents exactly the amount above other comparable authorities that Basildon spends on the administration of housing. In Basildon, £100 more is being spent on the administration of each council house. The

ridiculous amount of money being spent on public relations could be cut without affecting the provision of services. It is unjustifiable to be spending £150,000 on the Wat Tyler park, organising the countryside, when it has existed perfectly well for decades without being organised. Some £125,050 was lost by a golf course and a bowling alley run by the council and there are other obvious sectors for privatisation.

Vast sums of money are being spent to give advice as part of the "caring council" strategy, but not all of this advice is accurate or even necessary. An experiment monitored by my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) during 1982-83 showed that seconding two members of the DHSS staff to train social services staff was a cost-effective means of providing knowledge about financial benefits. This arrangement cost local government nothing and provided an increased level of advice through professional staff.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Amess: I have only a little more to say and those hon. Members waiting to speak may be annoyed if I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Perhaps the most disgraceful thing that the council has done in response to rate limitation concerned the letter that the leader of the authority sent to every one of my constituents just before Christmas. Hon. Members can guess what it was about. It told them that they were yet again under attack. The letter said that the Government would cut five key services affecting in particular pensioners, the young unemployed, senior citizens and all those without jobs. I would have welcomed it if my constituents had received a Christmas card with good wishes from the council, but to alarm and frighten people in this fashion is absolutely disgraceful.

It is not the Government's job to decide how the council should spend the money available to it on the provision of services. It is a matter for the local authority. It is about time that it accepted responsibility for its actions. A Government who seek to put flesh on the bones of Tony Crosland's classic phrase, "The party's over" deserve our support. In view of that remark, the Government deserve the support of the whole House. In defence of jobs, in defence of the wealth creation needed to run efficient social services and of the whole of the community of Basildon, I support the order.

7.47 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) claims that he speaks on behalf of those who have left the east end. I speak on behalf of those who, like myself, still live in the east end. The House will be sorry that the Secretary of State saw fit to open the debate with vulgar invective and uncontrolled abuse directed at the rate capped authorities in general and Hackney in particular. I simply do not understand why he sneered when he referred to Hackney being Britain's poorest borough. That is not a label that it put on itself—it comes from the inner cities urban directive from his Department. I am amazed that he does not read his own documents. As several hon. Members have said, the ground rules between local government and central Government have changed. Undoubtedly they have changed since I worked as a civil servant in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

I cannot conceive of any Secretary of State or other Minister coming before the House and using the insulting and contemptible language that the Secretary of State for the Environment used about local authorities. It is an extraordinary turn of events.

It is difficult to use exciting or poetic language when talking about local government, but although our words are bound to be prosaic, the consequences of what we decide can only be momentous. I am one of those who believe that few people realise either the scale or the nature of the constitutional crisis on which we are about to embark. If we pass the order, not only shall we end local government as an independent democratic force; we shall have defied that integrity which is essential to the survival of parliamentary democracy, and I intend to devote my speech to explaining that.

We all know that the Ministers and civil servants at the Department of the Environment have on the shelf emergency legislation to deal with what will happen if any local authorities defy this rate-capping order. The basis of that legislation is that commissioners will take over the running of local authorities. The day that a commissioner walks up the steps of the town hall in Hackney representing, as he does, de facto rule from Whitehall will be a day of failure for the people of Hackney, for the Department of the Environment and policies that it has long held dear, for this Government and for parliamentary democracy itself. Government by commissioners acting autocratically and inevitably arbitrarily in the face of legislation that wil be rushed through the House ought to play no part in our constitution.

We must ask ourselves who is to blame. The Government will say that it is Hackney council, and they will expect Labour politicians to say that it is the Government. I suggest that the Government are placing Hackney council in an impossible position, and I ask right hon. and hon. Members to bear with me if I bore them with two vital sets of statistics. I want to compare what the Government are ordering Hackney council to do with what the council wants to do, and I shall suggest that each of those positions and every position between them is impossible.

There are no circumstances in which Hackney borough council can achieve what the Government want it to do or what it wants to do within the context of the law. That is the gravity of this situation. If the motion is passed, the Government, civil servants—I have talked privately to a number of them—and every expert in local government know that Hackney borough council is being ordered by Parliament to defy the law. That is an extraordinary state of affairs, and that is the challenge that I ask the Minister to answer.

Let us consider the expenditure implied by the Government's maximum rate. It is £92 million. From that, we have to take the block grant of £38 million. Then we have to take account of the rate equalisation grant and the recovery of the deficit which Hackney council will have. We find that the rate requirement is £50 million, or a rate of 141·18p. That is what the Government say that Hackney council has to do.

Then let us consider what Hackney council wants to do. If we take the expenditure at its budget level based on a standstill budget with no growth, we find that it wants to spend £120 million. The block grant then becomes £9 million. If we then take account of the rate equalisation

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grant and the recovery of the deficit, the net resources required are £107 million. Instead of a rate of 141·18p, that is equivalent to a local rate of 312·20p.

Two astonishing figures emerge from those two different approaches by the Government and by Hackney borough council. The first figure, which makes almost everything that every hon. Member has said seem trivial, is that the total shortfall in resources for Hackney borough council is no less than £56 million. The gap between the budget and the implied budget is £27 million.

Everyone knows how the figures have come about, and it is no good the Secretary of State saying, as he did, that it has something to do with employing a lot of staff, with there being a lot of empty houses and with the direct labour force losing money. The enormous difference between the two figures comes from the change in the block grant as a result of the penalty system. On the Government's scenario, the block grant is £38 million. On Hackney council's scenario, as a result of the penalty system, it falls to £9 million.

I can remember when Governments paid between 61 per cent. and 64 per cent. of local authority expenditure. If Hackney council sought to carry out its standstill budget, the Government would be paying not 61 per cent., not the average of about 38 per cent., but 7·5 per cent. It is because they are asked to pay 7·5 per cent. that Britain's poorest borough will not be able to cope in any conceivable circumstances.

Let us consider what Hackney council might have done in the past and what some other councils are doing and see whether it is feasible. I have also discussed this privately with some of those involved. First of all, there is the question of balances. There are no balances. The figures that I have just given are based on a deficit of £1·1 million. The Ministers have received a letter from the district auditor saying that in his view the deficit is likely to be £6 million. In my view, the district auditor's figure is wrong and exaggerated. It is an old figure. The deficit is more likely to be nearer the £1·1 million than the £6 million.

It was as a result of that that the Ministers suggested that Hackney council might raise its rates by 22 per cent. and, therefore, its revenue by £11·5 million, and then they would penalise it to the extent of £5 million. I can assure Ministers that Hackney council will not apply for an offer which is too easy to refuse.

Then there is the possibility of creative accounting. I am so worried about what is happening that I have been seeing the director of finance regularly. I saw him last on Saturday, but I had a major meeting with him on Friday, when I asked him what was the scope for creative accounting in these impossible figures. He replied that there was no scope for creative accounting and that now there was scope only for fraudulent accounting. He added that if he embarked on fraudulent accounting, he would take Hackney council into a New York-type of financial collapse. He said that he and the district auditor would not be prepared to do that and that the Government should not ask him to do it.

I then looked to see whether there could be any transfers from capital. However, first it is necessary to get permission from the Secretary of State to make transfers from capital to revenue account. Secondly, Hackney's capital account has been cut so much that it only means that next year there will be increasing revenue problems which again will take the council towards bankruptcy. Thirdly, Hackney council will simply not ask the Secretary of State whether it can use those capital accounts.

That being so, we reach the position where one borough council is being asked to cut its services, depending on the size of its deficit, by between 28 and 32 per cent. in one year. It is my submission that it is impossible for any major organisation, let alone a local authority, to cut its operation by between 28 and 32 per cent. in one year.

The director of finance has written a note referring to the fact that the Secretary of State has been taken to court. The basis of the council's legal action against the Secretary of State for the Environment is that cuts of more than 6 per cent. to 7 per cent. in one year are unachievable.

That, broadly, remains the position. The director of finance says that, very shortly after the cuts increase from 7 per cent. over one year, the council will move into a grey area where it is not possible to say whether it is in breach of its statutory obligations and its common law obligations. However, once it starts to move much above that and gets to between 10 per cent. and 12 per cent., the council will unmistakably move into a breach of both its statutory obligations and its common law obligations. Ministers know this, and I am quite certain that the civil servants sitting in that box up there know this. The Minister must tell Hackney council what it has got to do.

The director of finance has assured me, and he has assured the council in writing, that it is inevitable that there will be breaches of the law. I said that we should cut out the politics and the rhetoric, that as some local authority functions are discretionary while others are obligatory we should leave aside the discretionary functions and deal with the obligatory functions. The director of finance told me that if these cuts have to be made we shall be in breach of our statutory obligations. I have noticed that many hon. Members have referred not to the statutory obligations but to the discretionary obligations.

Although it may be possible for every other local authority to cope, the Minister, his civil servants and all the local government experts know that it will be impossible for Hackney borough council to cope. The only question is which laws it will break. It can be directly confronted by its ratepayers, or by the district auditor or by its ratepayers in respect of specific Acts of Parliament.

In order to illustrate this impossible position, the director of finance has tried to work out what would happen if there were a 28 per cent. cut in each service provided by the local authority. Only three main services are involved. The Minister cannot maintain that the Hackney borough council can wind up its women's committee and its police committee and that it could sack the person it has just employed to deal with the blind and the mentally handicapped. There are only three services where any significant impact can be made: housing, social services and general public services, which include refuse collection.

Ministers know that all of Hackney's problems have been caused by housing. Hackney has some of the worst housing in Britain. It is in housing that the cuts will have to be made, but it is in housing that the cuts cannot be made. Hackney council would have to cut its housing services by £9 million. How could it do that? Ministers say that Hackney should raise rents. The district auditor is conducting an inquiry into Hackney's housing revenue account. In April he is to issue a statutory statement. In

it, the district auditor will almost certainly invite Hackney borough council to raise its rent by £1·50 per week. That would bring in £3 million, but Hackney council would still be short of between £24 million and £29 million, depending on the size of the deficit.

In order to demonstrate the scale of the problem the director of finance set out what would happen if Hackney borough council raised rents by 33 per cent. It would probably produce social unrest and even riots in the streets. I presume that not even Ministers would invite Hackney borough council to raise rents in one year by 33 per cent. However, even if Hackney borough council did so, it would still be faced with the prospect that not one person in Hackney would get a transfer, other than on very peculiar management grounds. Repairs would be drastically reduced, routine maintenance would not be carried out, home owners would get no improvement grants and the direct labour force would be abolished. I told the director of finance that he could not do this and that he had a statutory obligation under the Housing Act 1957 and subsequent Acts, and also under the common law, to carry out repairs and maintenance. The Secretary of State for the Environment must know that recently more than 1,000 tenants took Hackney borough council to the courts and that they have been awarded substantial damages.

If this order is passed, the result will be local government through the courts. Thousands of tenants will take Hackney borough council to the courts for breach of its statutory obligations. I never heard of anything so absurd as the suggestion that judges will decide which repairs can be carried out and that they will award compensation against a borough that is already massively under threat from the courts. It is not possible. It is manic, stupid local government and the Minister knows that it will not happen. If the Minister sends a commissioner to Hackney it will still not happen. There is no way in which Hackney borough council will be allowed to get into that position and no way in which the Government will allow local government to be made more expensive by injunctions and mandatory orders being obtained from the courts obliging the council to carry out repairs, together with the added burden of compensation being imposed by the law courts. A local authority cannot function in that way.

There is the same problem with social services. Hackney borough council has to save £7 million. That would mean sacking tomorrow 70 workers, shutting down five day nurseries and five old people's homes, a cut of 50 per cent. in the allowances for foster parents, a cut of 50 per cent. in the grants to voluntary play groups, the imposition of substantial charges for home helps and meals on wheels and a reduction in the services for the physically and mentally handicapped. Some of those services have to be provided by law. Hackney borough council cannot avoid carrying them out.

Therefore, the Government are saying to Parliament that this order will oblige Hackney borough council to breach its statutory obligations under the law. I never thought that I would ever hear a Minister make a statement of that kind. I defy any Minister, with the best advice that he can get from his civil servants, to deny that that is the case. The director of finance is caught in a box and Hackney borough council is caught in a box. It was all very well for hon. Members to stand up and sneer at Hilda Keene. I support the stand that she has taken. There is no rhetoric in Hackney. Nobody is jumping up and down and shouting about the Conservative Government. People are desperately worried about what will happen.

The Hackney Gazette is really a 50-page advertisement about rate-capping meetings. At those meetings, nobody gets excited and there is no rabble rousing. One tries patiently to explain the facts. I thought that people would not be very interested in the facts and that they would not believe that this impossible position could come about, but they are slowly beginning to believe it and to understand that this will come about. My complaint about the Secretary of State is that he is creating a tragedy and a constitutional crisis that he, this Government and the Department of the Environment will live to regret until the end of time.

8.6 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) is by convention, as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, required to restrain himself from taking part in the debate, but I believe that he and I see eye to eye on this matter. It was clearly a matter of amusement to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that a Wiltshire moonraker should be taking part in the debate, but perhaps the hon. Member forgets that he and I fought our first parliamentary election together in Camden in 1979. During my years in Camden I learned a good deal about council overspending, an art which was later described vividly by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer), a former Camden councillor.

My own district council in Salisbury is justly proud of its modest rate, and impeccably managed finances. It resents being told how and when it should spend its money, but that is a debate for another time. Salisbury citizens desire and deserve an improved local infrastructure and improved amenities — from roads to sports centres and cinemas, not to mention a coach park outside the cathedral close. However, what our councillors want for the district often involves the consent of or contributions from the county council. But the county council has within its boundaries a town called Swindon, which is embraced by a rate-capped borough called Thamesdown.

In many ways, Thamesdown is unremarkable. It has the national average birth and death rates. It has the national average household size. It has a higher than average percentage of owner-occupiers. It has an average socio-economic grouping and below average unemployment. And 70 per cent. of its population have one or more cars, compared with the national average of 60 per cent., while 15 per cent. of its population have two or more cars. However, the number of full-time employees in Thamesdown has risen by 4·8 per cent. in the last year and part-time employment is up by 3·6 per cent. As for the planning department, the local authority family average is £6·7 per head, but Thamesdown manages to spend £24·3 per head. If Thamesdown had spent at just the average level, it could have saved £2·7 million.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Key: No.

The total debt per head for the family of local authorities is £519, but for Thamesdown it is £970. The debt charge per family of local authorities is £17·7 per

[Mr. Key]

head, but for Thamesdown it is £47·5 per head. The rent arrears of the local authority family are 2·8 per cent. of rent collectable, but for Thamesdown the figure is 3·9 per cent. The average spend per head of population in the local authority family of similar authorities is £61 but in Thamesdown it is £81. Thamesdown's budget is 90·26 per cent. over GREA and 5 per cent. over target. If it objected to the Department of the Environment's figures which were were announced last December, why did not it come and talk to the Secretary of State?

Some reasons have been put forward. It can be argued that Swindon is a booming new town and therefore needs economic expansion wherever it can get it so that it is not surprising that Thamesdown's budget is running away. It could also be argued that Thamesdown is, in effect, a new town without the status of a new town development corporation. But my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes account of that in the calculation of GREA. It is certainly possible to make a strong case for Thamesdown selling off some of its capital assets such as the Brunel shopping centre.

But none of that detracts from the strong feelings that are aroused elsewhere in Wiltshire at Thamesdown's profligacy and the effect of that on the rest of the county. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who refused to give way to me earlier, should note that, contrary to what he said, Swindon, alias Thamesdown, has developed on the back of the rest of the districts of Wiltshire.

I read in the latest edition of the *Wiltshire County Council News* that the council is about to spend £360,000 on adapting a Swindon building for its social services department and that £525,000 will be spent knocking down and rebuilding a mini county hall in Swindon. In a recent letter from the social services department in Trowbridge, the county town, Salisbury was characterised as a sleepy little market town which should not be disturbed too much. I know that most county social services activity is required in Thamesdown, but I much regret that the eyes of the county have been turned away from us towards the infidel Mecca of Thamesdown when our social service department and others are crying out for more resources.

It is bad enough for those of us south of Salisbury Plain being governed from somewhere call Trowbridge. But now the centre of gravity is moving along the M4 towards Swindon. At last I understand what Wiltshire county council planners mean by the M4 corridor. It will become the longest county hall corridor in Britain.

But I cannot blame the county council for all that. The attention that it pays to Thamesdown is inevitably forced on it by that town's expenditure and expansion. The county council bears the initial infrastructure costs of development, such as roads, and finances the schools and social services, and so on.

My constituents are crying out for improved amenities. The county tells us that we must not build any more houses or develop any more industrial sites to provide jobs in Salisbury. Regrettably, the county has found it necessary to go back on a pledge that it made, as the highway authority, to finance a bridge which would link the Churchfields industrial estate to the ring road, relieving Salisbury of environmental damage and enhancing employment.

At meeting after meeting and in the structure plan the county is forced to concentrate its efforts and resources on the infamous M4 corridor. In the circumstances it is surprising that the county manages to provide the services that it does, for which I congratulate it.

But be it in the provision of school buses, school books or jobs, Wiltshire county council is forced to squeeze and penny-pinch and one of the main reasons for that is the spend, spend, spend that is going on in Thamesdown at the other end of the county, over the hill and far away with the fairies as far as finance is concerned. That is reason enough for me to vote in favour of the order tonight.

8.13 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): It is hard to know where to begin to explain the problems that this rate-capping order will cause in Peckham. The problems are matched only by the enormity of the Government's ignorance of them. I shall try to do so, but without much hope, because if the Government and Conservative Members know little, it is clear that they care even less.

The Government's policies are already causing misery, family breakdown and illness. I see that in my surgery but Conservative Members do not know about it. Nearly 90 people came to see me at my last surgery. They did not come for the pure pleasure of waiting for hours in the queue with all the other people. They came because they were desperate. The Government are trying to make that situation worse.

The council is the biggest employer, landlord and provider of services in Southwark. There is no way that the private sector will provide the jobs, housing and services if the council is clobbered under this order.

One in five of the community of Southwark are already out of work and looking for a job. Unemployment is a particular problem for young people and there is a growing number of long-term unemployed. If Southwark is rate-capped, not only will council jobs be hit but jobs in the private sector too. Southwark council is a major buyer of goods and services.

Housing will be hit by the order. The council is by far the largest landlord. It is no good thinking that people in Peckham can buy their own homes. Housing in central London is extraordinarily expensive. Less than 2 per cent. of two-bedroomed dwellings for sale cost under £30,000 and that £30,000 is far beyond the reach of nearly everyone who lives in Peckham.

The local council should provide services according to need. It should not be for businesses to provide those services according to how much people can afford. Anyway, people in Peckham cannot afford to pay for services. The problems are growing and we need more spending. We cannot solve the problems by spending alone, but we cannot solve them without spending increases.

Let me give some examples. The Willowbrook estate was a nice place when it was built some 20 years ago. People were pleased to live and bring up their families there. Now the window frames are rotting and the panes are falling out. When the workmen went to repair the window frames they discovered that the estate was virtually made of asbestos. Therefore, they could not do the work while the tenants were still there. There is nowhere to move the tenants because the Government

have more or less stopped housebuilding in the area and more homes cannot be built on the empty land in the borough.

The council has closed the public lavatory on the Willowbrook estate because it says that the asbestos makes it dangerous. What an irony that the public lavatory should be closed while people are still having to live in the estate and bring up their families surrounded by asbestos. When people move out of the flats the council is trying to leave them empty so that eventually the major work can be carried out. But with the ever-increasing waiting lists, people move in and squat in empty flats. There is a terrible circular problem.

Those Conservative Members who are girding up their loins to troop through the Lobby to vote about what should happen in Southwark would not be prepared to live surrounded by asbestos on the Willowbrook estate. They talk about peripheral savings and economies when we are concerned about the millions of pounds that need spending to meet the council's obligations to its tenants.

The Gloucester Grove estate has a design fault in the refuse system. Flies nest and breed in the brick. The rubbish warms up the brick and as soon as the rubbish doors are open the flies shoot out like something out of a Hitchcock film. Therefore, people do not want to open the doors to put their rubbish in, and leave it beside the chute. Dogs tear open the bags and the place looks like a tip. I hope that nobody will make any cheap political points about it being a Labour council because the two estates that I have just mentioned are former GLC estates and the GLC has been successively controlled by the Labour and Conservative parties.

The Sumner estate is another former GLC estate which is just getting too old. The lifts there keep breaking down. It is no joke to live on an estate where one either has to walk up five flights of stairs leaving the shopping at the bottom while taking a push chair and kid up, risking having the shopping nicked, or leave the push chair and kid at the bottom while taking the shopping up, worrying all the time that the kid will run off in the meantime. Those estates are getting old and need to be brought up to date.

The GLC built those estates and Southwark council is responsible for managing them. The estates have to be kept in good order. The Government call Southwark irresponsible, but it is the other way around. Responsible authorities want to carry out their obligations to their tenants, the elderly, the under-fives and the local work force and they want to spend money to meet the needs of the community. Irresponsible authorities say, "Cut services and let them stew behind their own doors. We shall carry on putting up rents and tough for them."

Last week I was in Love Walk day centre for the elderly. The increasing number of elderly people in the population will spend week after week isolated and miserable in their own homes unless they can get social services transport to local authority day centres. Why do we not have enough drivers to take elderly people to those day centres? Conservative Members talk about the efficient use of resources, but there is nothing efficient about leaving day centres half empty because there are not enough drivers to transport the many elderly people who want to go to the day centres.

It was said earlier that providing local authority services was expensive. We should remember that we are talking about people's wages. Council manual workers are already low paid for providing a valuable public service and for doing jobs that are sometimes dangerous and often dirty. They need an increase in wages and not the proposed cuts in the cost of services.

Most council manual workers live in their local borough and have seen their rent and rates forced up, their houses not being repaired quickly enough and services to their families coming under threat. It is an insult to people to talk about public services not being productive. How dare they say that work with under-fives in play schemes and nurseries is not productive?

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Will the hon. Lady explain why the cost of providing services in Southwark is in most cases twice that in neighbouring Wandsworth and in many cases three times as much?

Ms. Harman: Southwark council, to its eternal credit, is struggling to increase and improve its services to meet needs. It needs to do more of that and not less. I back the council and stand by it in that endeavour.

It is an insult to say that those who work in council services are not productive. It is productive to look after young children. How dare people claim that it is not productive to look after the elderly? Home helps do an important job trying to look after the elderly and to allow them to stay in their own homes. I thought that the Government favoured care in the community, but, it seems, far from it.

How dare people say that repairing houses, cleaning streets and collecting rubbish is not productive work? Of course it is. The Government want to substitute cut-throat entrepreneurship for care and compassion. The Government are offering worse or non-existent services and exploitative terms and conditions of employment or no job at all.

We cannot look at rate capping in isolation, because the people of Peckham are being hit from all directions. The health service locally is threatened with £1 million of cuts which will mean fewer jobs and services at a time when health problems are increasing and will increase even more if housing deteriorates because of the proposed cuts.

The Inner London education authority is also being threatened. The proposed millions of pounds of cuts will mean job cuts and cuts in school meals services and clothing allowances. Children's education will be undermined. If rate capping is implemented and the GLC is abolished, its former estates will be badly hit.

The Government are trying to divide and rule in Labour areas. They would like to see a low-paid work force get angry with the local council because it feels that it cannot increase their wages as much as they ought to be increased. The Government would like to see the work force get angry with the council because workers do not feel secure in their jobs. The Government would like tenants to get angry with the council because rents are being forced up and conditions are worsening. The Government would like to see tenants get angry with the work force because repairs are taking longer. However, the Government have not succeeded in their divide and rule strategy, because they have been rumbled. In Peckham and in Southwark they will face a united front of tenants, unions and councillors. As the hon. Member for Peckham, I will be standing alongside those groups.

Of course rates are too high. The Government should not have reduced the rate support grant. The council wants to provide the services and reduce the rates. That will

[Ms. Harman]

require more help for a poor council in a poor area and the Government can well afford that help. We are a wealthy nation, not a Third world country struggling with the problems of drought and underdevelopment. We are certainly wealthy enough to ensure that we have decent employment and housing in Southwark.

A lot of rubbish is talked about ratepayers being wealthy business men. That is an insult to the ratepayers in my constituency, many of whom are low paid and have to struggle to pay their rates. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) should be ashamed of complaining that about one third of householders do not pay their rates. They would like to be in his position and be able to pay their rates. They cannot do so because they do not have enough money, not only for rates, but for anything else.

It is nonsense to say that high rates cause unemployment. The reverse is true. Where commercial rates are low, property owners put up rents so that businesses end up paying the same for their premises. They merely pay the money in rent rather than in rates. When money is paid in rates it is at least ploughed back into the community through local jobs and local services. That does not happen when the money is paid to property companies.

I find it sickening to have to debate what is happening in Southwark with Conservative Members from Wiltshire, Northamptonshire, Surrey and Sussex who know nothing about the situation in my constituency. They have no right to go through the Lobby and vote down services in my constituency. They are not elected to decide on services in Southwark. The House should mind its own business and let Southwark people decide about Southwark's services.

It is ironic that we are being asked to support the order, which centralises power, by a Government who were elected on a pledge to "bring power to the people."

8.27 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): What a remarkable little speech that was from the hon. Member from Peckham (Ms. Harman). I am sure that it will go down well with the Labour party's women's committee, but it will not cut much ice in the House or with her constituents who have been thrown out of work because of high rates.

The hon. Member asked for the evidence that people had been thrown out of work because of high rates. The Sheffield district chamber of trade has welcomed rates limitation and even gone so far——

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way? He has mentioned Sheffield.

Mr. Hayes: In a moment. Let me deal with this point and then I will give way.

Mr. Michie: I will see the hon. Gentleman outside.

Mr. Hayes: I shall be delighted to see the hon. Gentleman outside if he will buy me a drink.

The Sheffield district chamber of trade wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment:

"The Chambers' Council welcomes the rate capping regulations which have been introduced and expresses its thanks to you for stabilising future rate demands."

The CBI said in February last year:

"High rate increases raise costs, reduce competitiveness, discourage expansion and investment and harm job prospects.

It is time to halt the serious damage to business caused by a small minority of high spending councils. The selected rate limitation scheme is likely to do this while leaving the vast majority of local councils continuing to operate responsibly without any restraint on their freedom of action."

Is it not significant that the top 18 overspenders are responsible for three quarters of the £848 million overspend in local government? Is it not a coincidence that the top nine overspenders — some of which are now being dealt with—have increased their rates or precepts by 40 per cent. in the past three years? Of course it is.

Mr. John Fraser *rose——*

Mr. Michie *rose——*

Mr. Hayes: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fraser: I think——

Mr. Hayes: I am sorry, but I wanted to give way to the hon. Member with a beard.

Mr. Dobson *rose——*

Mr. Corbyn *rose——*

Mr. Michie *rose——*

Mr. Hayes: I give way to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Mr. Michie: That is the first time that a Tory has given me precedence over privilege, and I appreciate that. However, the hon. Gentleman should not bother to read out stuff from the Sheffield chamber of trade. Can the hon. Gentleman give us some good examples of what he means? Incidentally, he should not use the example of steel, because half the steelworks in the Sheffield area are in Rotherham, which is low rated.

Mr. Hayes: The examples are obvious. The hon. Gentleman should ask himself why the people in his constituency are unemployed. It is not insignificant that between April 1979 and April 1984 prices have risen by 63 per cent., earnings have risen by 75 per cent. and rates have risen by 103 per cent.

I support the order with some sadness. But we have been forced into supporting it not by the Whipping system or by the Government's quite justifiable big majority, but by Labour-controlled authorities which have been flying in the face of economic reality for too long. It was made absolutely clear in the 1983 general election that the Conservative party would protect the ratepayer. The Labour party has not tried to do that.

I have two vested interests. In my constituency of Harlow the district council is deciding at this very moment what the rate is to be. I sincerely hope that it will sense and will recognise the needs and sensitivities of the people of Harlow and will not deliberately push up expenditure to the £10 million ceiling. That would be a disaster for the people of Harlow.

I see the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in the Chamber, so I had better explain my other vested interest. I happen to rent a small flat in Islington, but not, I am happy to say, in his constituency. Islington council provides us with a classic example of flagrant overspending. Between 1981 and 1985 it increased its expenditure by 58 per cent., compared with a national increase of 23 per cent. and compared with an increase in prices—using the gross domestic product deflator—of

17 per cent. That has been an unmitigated disaster for jobs. I know that it is terribly easy to talk about some of the lunatic things that Islington council does. For example, we could mention the Irish joke officer for £19,250. Perhaps midnight munchies will interest the hon. Member for Islington, North. The council invested about £7,000 in setting up a Dial-a-Meal service. Mr. Peter Gresham, who is, I think, the council's employment officer, said that this particular co-operative

"is made up predominantly of ethnic minorities and single-parent families who have found it difficult to obtain employment in other fields."

That is all well and good, but after spending about £7,000 of ratepayers' money, he warned that he could not claim to be

"entirely optimistic about the future of this project."

Then we have the disaster of the *Islington News*—the Labour party's propaganda sheet, which crashed at a cost of £100,000 to the ratepayers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already mentioned the £31,000 for aerobics on the rates, which was also — surprise, surprise—an unmitigated disaster.

Mr. Dobson: It would be quite wrong of me to mention the name of the person concerned, but the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer), who has been denouncing Leicester city council's expenditure, will recall that he referred someone to me who had a mentally-handicapped son, and who was having problems because Islington council was being prevented from spending money on providing special accommodation for the mentally handicapped. I find it rather odd that a Tory Member should need to refer that to me, and that I should have to listen tonight to someone denouncing Islington council.

Mr. Hayes: It is unfair of the hon. Gentleman to say that. In my brief time in the House I have always found him a fair-minded man, but that intervention was unworthy of him. If there is any difficulty in finding funds for proper projects, it is because the money for them has been frittered away on the very projects that I have outlined. As the hon. Member for Islington, North will know, an opinion poll was carried out. Some of the results are in his favour but some are not. It was a MORI poll, and it asked:

"Does the Islington council spend too much time on activities that do not benefit local residents?"

In reply, 52 per cent. said yes.

Mr. Corbyn: What else did it say?

Mr. Hayes: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity later to talk about the poll. But that question and answer shows what a high proportion of the people in Islington think.

Mr. Corbyn: When the hon. Gentleman visits Islington perhaps he will look around him and notice the number of people in need of help from the council's social services, and in need of housing help. If the order goes through, they will not get any help in the coming year and many jobs will also be lost. How many jobs will be destroyed by rate capping and by the hon. Gentleman's Government, and how many more people will find themselves queuing up, unable to provide the services that they should be providing?

Mr. Hayes: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how many jobs will be lost as a result of rate capping any more than I can give the exact figure for the tremendous number of jobs that are being lost through overspending.

Mr. Corbyn: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Hayes: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman once, so I shall not give way again. He should realise that in Islington 35 per cent. of the rates come from domestic ratepayers and 56 per cent. of the rates come from commercial and industrial ratepayers. Surely that is indicative of the problems that exist.

But some of the lunatic schemes that I have mentioned do not lie at the heart of the problem. They are the irritants, but they do not add up to that much money. The problem lies in gross financial mismanagement and incompetence. Islington is a classic example, because in the past three years jobs for the boys have increased by 17 per cent. In the past three years the increase in Hackney has been 28 per cent. Yet the national average for local government employment has fallen by 2 per cent. Surely that is indicative of what is happening.

I will give some other examples of chronic mismanagement in London. Debts from arrears of rents for council houses London-wide at present are £111 million. In Southwark the debt is £20 million, in Islington £5·8 million, and in Hackney £6·7 million. Opposition Members may say that it is because people are unemployed. Nothing could be further from the truth. If people are unemployed and are in real difficulties in paying their rents, the social security services are only too eager to help them out. That should not be forgotten.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: No, because many other Members wish to speak in the debate.

Several Opposition Members have gone as far as to say that if rate capping becomes the law of the land—as it will later this evening—there will be tremendous cuts in services. I urge the hon. Member for Peckham to study carefully the very interesting and worthwhile speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who explained precisely how local services will be affected. Opposition Members laid great emphasis on their quotations from the Audit Commission. I refer to page 2 of the report, where it says:

"Based on its work so far, the Commission is also of the opinion that there are substantial opportunities to save money in local government without adversely affecting services."

Those are the words of the Audit Commission, whose reports Opposition Members quote against the Government on so many occasions.

Opposition Members have the nerve to say that this House is to be simply a rubber stamp for rate capping, without adequate and proper discussion of the issues involved. They do so with the eloquence of Satan denouncing sin.

A well-wisher was kind enough to send me, in a buff envelope, the minutes of a meeting held at county hall on 29 November last year. It was a meeting between Mr. Ted Knight, of whom one or two hon. Members may have heard, and Mrs. Hodge, of whom one or two hon. Members have also heard. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) is right: Mrs. Hodge could solve many problems if she resigned as leader of the Islington district council. Let us see what happened

[Mr. Hayes]

at that meeting. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) may gasp. At that meeting it was decided to spend £350,000 of the ratepayers' money on a propaganda campaign. As true democrats, they followed the traditions of the Labour party. The meeting started at 10.45 and finished at 10.50. There was all of five minutes in which to have a full, fair, free and in-depth discussion. The situation is absolutely nonsensical.

I hope that Opposition Members will take particular heed of the words of the Leader of the Opposition when he urges councils to comply with the law. I can assure this House that it is in the interests of the ratepayer that they do so.

8.43 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I congratulate the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on an entertaining although not terribly persuasive performance.

It has been an odd debate because we have been trying to fix the rates for 13 individual councils. Like other hon. Members, I have considerable experience of rate fixing. I thought that we had left that behind us when we gave up our seats on local authorities to come into this House.

My recollections of trying to fix a rate for the London borough of Greenwich, when I was its leader over 10 years ago, was that it was an extremely difficult operation. One had to choose between competing claims for very scarce resources, and try to balance the needs of the consumers of the service against the ability of the ratepayers to meet the cost. One was surrounded by masses of information. One cannot complain about that tonight. We have an impossible task, with no information provided to us other than one piece of paper which gives us, in one case in handwritten form, the Secretary of State's decisions as to what the rate limits shall be.

There is a take-it-or-leave-it attitude about the approach that I find singularly unattractive. We are fixing the rates of 13 individual authorities in a sort of conveyor belt, mass production, cheaper-by-the-dozen operation which, with all respect to the hon. Member for Harlow, makes it an absolute pretence to suggest that the House of Commons is exercising any judgment here tonight. We have no information on which to make a balanced judgment.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) reminded us that during the long Committee stage of the Rates Bill we had firm assurances from the Government Front Bench that parliamentary scrutiny would be an effective safeguard against the unreasonable use of the Secretary of State's powers to designate authorities and fix their rates. As we have seen tonight, effective scrutiny is impossible. We have just the one set of figures before us.

The Secretary of State said earlier in the debate that it did not matter how we got the figures; that how they are arrived at is not for the House of Commons to know. The important question is: are they reasonable? With all respect to the Secretary of State, it is important to know how the figures were arrived at. In trying to fix a rate, the elements that go into it are a very important part of the calculation. Are the rate limits reasonable? It is impossible for hon. Members to answer that question. We have not the information to enable us to make that sort of judgment.

I have some information, knowledge and experience of the position in Greenwich, my own local authority, but I know nothing whatever about the situation in the other 12 authorities. I agree with the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). It is not my business to fix rates in Sheffield, Southwark, Haringey and other parts of the country. I did not come here to fix rates for other local authorities or, indeed, for my own.

What we are engaged in tonight is not parliamentary scrutiny; it is a rubber-stamping charade. That sort of thing brings Parliament into disrepute. That is ample ground, if there were no other, for voting against the order.

I have some information about the London borough of Greenwich. It came to me in the shape of a rather large tome, running to 300 pages, dealing with the council's spending plans for 1985-86. I thought that the compliments slip at the front was revealing. It came not with the compliments of the chief executive or of the borough treasurer but with the compliments of the campaign manager. That tells us something about who is important in local authorities these days.

The document starts from a position of total unreality. It tells us that this year the council spent an estimated £68 million. We are told that under the Rates Act the council has been given a maximum spending limit for 1985-86 of £66·5 million. I concede, without any question at all, that it would have been difficult for Greenwich, allowing for inflation, to get down from spending in the current financial year to £66·5 million next year.

The statement goes on to say that the draft budget agreed by the policy and resources committee is £78·3 million. So Greenwich is budgeting to spend an extra £10 million—an increase of 15 per cent. in one year. Some of us with experience of local government know that it is not easy to increase spending at that speed. One has the feeling that Greenwich was determined to make a difficult position absolutely impossible by increasing spending to that extraordinary figure.

I understand the reaction that I get from many of my constituents about the council's sense of priorities, because I note that the police adviser and his department will absorb £33,000 next year; the women's department another £39,000; and that the press and public relations department, which provides ever more free newspapers to jam our letter boxes, will absorb £151,000. There is something called the campaign unit. In my days, the political parties ran campaigns, yet Greenwich ratepayers must next year provide £139,000 for campaigns. We all know who will benefit from that sort of campaigning. Grants administration next year—the giving away of the money — will cost £25,000. Grants as a whole are budgeted at £848,000—an increase over the current year of £330,000. Therefore, I find it hard to believe that Greenwich cannot make cuts in spending.

I understand the point made by the council and Labour Members that if all the Socialist candyfloss could be removed it would still not be possible to get down to the rate set by the Government. However, it should be possible for Greenwich not to make matters as difficult as it is by spending on a number of services that ordinary people do not regard as having a high priority in this difficult economic climate.

Greenwich and other Labour authorities are threatening not to levy a rate. Greenwich has a ceremonial meeting on 7 March. I believe that to be a suicidal policy. If the rate is not levied, sooner or later—no doubt sooner—the money will run out and the jobs and the services that we are told the argument is about will be at risk.

If there is no money, people in local authorities cannot be paid and services cannot be provided. Refusing to levy a rate is a recipe for chaos and confusion on a grand scale. Worse than that, it is a gamble — and when Labour Members are honest, they must agree with that. The gamble is that that somehow, magically, the Government will be persuaded to back down because of the threat of confusion and chaos in the rate-capped authorities. That is an extremely dangerous gamble. Those at risk will not be the councillors but the council employees. Their jobs will be on the line because they depend on council services. If councillors want to gamble, let them gamble with their futures — they should not gamble with the futures of others who elected them to look after and administer local services. That is why I regard the decision not to levy a rate as wholly nonsensical. It lets down those who elected the councillors.

It has been argued on the Government Benches that rate capping provides protection for local people. I suspect that that may not be the position. At least some of the rate-capped authorities will be tempted to cut absolutely essential services rather than the Socialist flim-flam and candyfloss. They will cut the essential services for ordinary people and seek to put the blame on the Government. The long list of possible economies that we have heard read out time and again tonight suggest that that will be the tactic. The cuts will hit not the police advisers, the nuclear-free zone co-ordinators and so on, but the home helps and the essential social services. That is why I believe rate capping to be politically inept, constitutionally absurd and a bureaucratic nightmare.

8.53 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Although I follow the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), I cannot agree with his conclusions. I believe that rate capping is absolutely essential for the future of this country and all its councils that are crying out for help because they want real jobs in the cities rather than the phoney jobs created by Labour-controlled councils trying to buy votes.

We know why Leicester is to be rate-capped. Overall, rates in Leicester have risen by 66·7 per cent. since 1981-82, and since 1983-84 they have risen by a further 4·7 per cent; from 35·8p to 37·5p in the pound. Yet the national average for a similar-sized city is 23 per cent.

I represent the people of Leicester and I do not take kindly to hon. Members—especially those from another part of the city—claiming to represent and speak for the people of Leicester, East. They do not; I do, and I know what they want.

Leicester's current spending has risen by 46·1 per cent. since 1981-82. Its rate limit for 1985-86 is based on a spending level that is really a cash freeze on the 1984-85 budget. Why cannot the council carry inflation for a change? The expenditure of Leicester since 1978 has risen by 134 per cent., which is scandalous. The people of Leicester are entitled to something better.

There have been tremendous allegations that Leicester will not receive any more grants when capping comes into operation. Yet Leicester has received £35·9 million of rate support grant over four years. In 1984-85, it received £9·7 million. That is one heck of a lot of money. Other grants, Government grants and allocations total £5·4 million towards the urban programme and the inner area programme has received £20 million since 1978. That is not small fry to me, and Leicester has a lot to answer for.

On 13 February my right hon. Friend announced the revised figures for Leicester. It means that the city will levy an additional £3·5 million, although the budget limit remains the same. That limit has been raised from 16·27p in the pound to 25·22p in the pound. The only reason for the change is the further information that the Government have finally received about the council's financial reserves. Leicester city council, controlled by the Labour party, has griped, griped and griped and taken no notice of the day of execution that had to come. When it arrived, it challenged the figure and said, "We was robbed." If it had co-operated with my right hon. Friend, there would have been a different figure originally. It has abused its position. It should have provided the information. I applaud the leader of the Conservative party on the city council, Terence Harris, for coming to London to discuss the matter and putting the case clearly.

Is it fair that 60 per cent. of the rates are paid by local industries—yet none of them has a vote? The businesses do not have any say, yet they sweat time after time as the council levies appalling rates and pays blatant disregard to the wishes of the businesses—which are the job creators and providers for the city.

Opposition Members argue that the Leicester Labour party has been returned three times in the elections, which shows that the people of Leicester have voted for more of the same. Yet less than 40 per cent. of the people voted, and those who did voted for more of the same, not for massively increased public expenditure.

I warn the Leicester city council Labour party that if the businesses in the city had a vote, there would never be another Labour-controlled city council in Leicester. That day must come. I can say that with certainty because, for example, the CBI in Leicester, which represents businesses there, does not like rate capping or the way in which its members have been forgotten by Leicester city council. The Leicester chamber of commerce and industry is hopping mad over the current situation.

Each year there is supposed to be consultation between the city council and local businesses. That consultation now takes the form of the city council simply saying, "This is the new rate. You have no choice in the matter." I would not describe that as consultation. If the Conservatives were in power, there would be real consultation.

On 14 December 1984 — his words appear in the *Official Report* at column 656 — my right hon. Friend made it clear that Leicester's budget of £24·6 million was 4·9 per cent. above target and 27·7 per cent. above GREA. The troubles in Leicester date back to 1979 and the arrival of the red peril—the Labour-controlled city council—and since I came on the scene in 1981 I have witnessed that body inventing functions, preparing a no-sacking policy for all its staff, forming a mammoth public relations department and introducing a strange equal opportunities policy which makes some people more equal than others.

It has established a race relations and racial awareness unit, a nuclear free zone which is supposed to scare everybody who does not live in the area—as I live in the city, I am not confident that we will not be attacked, simply because it is a nuclear-free zone — and a mammoth campaign, of which I am extremely suspicious, on behalf of the low paid.

Leicester should have used some of its £5·5 million reserves to hold down the rates. If that had been done, the present situation would not be so bad. That cannot be done now because Leicester city council lends money to other

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local authorities. It is clear that Leicester had it coming. We warned the city council what would happen, but it disregarded our warnings.

I will give the House some rating facts. We are the third largest non-metropolitan district council in the country. We have a population of nearly 280,000. The amount spent on public relations has risen to £45,000. the public relations unit is anti-rate-capping, and in its publication entitled "Leicester Link" it said:

"Rate-capping. Here's what you lose: your services, your job, your rights—all for the price of a pint of beer a week."

Even if the cost is a pint a week, let us save that money.

The nuclear-free zone signs have cost £1,000; the racial awareness training course for staff, whatever that involves, has cost £15,000; the low pay campaign, £25,000; employment and economic development activities, £10,000; video advice units, £25,000; and ethnic minority consultations, £10,000. Leicester City council does not even charge for the rent and provision of an office and free telephone to striking miners—striking miners who do not come from Leicestershire because 98 per cent. of Leicestershire miners have gone back to work —*[Interruption.]*—and a large number of them have been working the whole time.

The leader of the Conservative group in Leicester has asked for a cut of £2 million, which is not too much to ask. He has asked for no more recruitment to take place and for there not to be a PR unit. I support his aims.

I appeal especially on behalf of the businesses of Leicester because they pay the rates and do not receive value for money. The trouble is that the Labour-controlled council members love spending everybody else's money. That is a typical Labour ploy; they are trying to buy respectability which they cannot obtain because their manifestos do not deserve the credit of people voting for them.

The leader of the Conservative group was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of Friday 14 December as having said:

"'In the manner of classic bureaucracies, the council sat down and invented a lot of new functions for itself'. He said the entire tier of local government represented by the council was unnecessary."

Not one of my hon. Friends would disagree with that.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that there was no guarantee for the future. He was wrong, as we shall hear later. He said that a deterioration in services was coming. He was wrong about that, because too much was being spent to begin with. He said that community projects would suffer. He was wrong on that, too, as I shall prove shortly. He said that the parks were under threat.

Bearing those statements by the hon. Member for Blackburn in mind, let us consider how many people are employed by this so-called wonderful Leicester city council. I hasten to state that I admire a large number of the council's employees——

Mr. Janner: The hon. Gentleman does not want to sack them all, then?

Mr. Bruinvels: They have been sending me brown envelopes containing some interesting information. The majority of them are sick about the way in which they have been told what to do.

Non-manual staff employed by the city total 1,757, and there are 2,129 manual workers. In transport, there are 127 non-manual and 637 manual employees. In recreation, there are 185 non-manual and 396 manual workers. In the refuse department there are 17 non-manual employees and 159 manual.

Mr. Janner: Disgraceful.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am worried especially about manning levels in the chief executive's legal secretariat department, which employs 144. I should like to know what they are all doing for the city and the citizens. I suppose those in the finance department are trying to work out an alternative policy to rate capping. I understand that 182 work in the finance department. In the engineering department there are 215 non-manual employees and 257 manual. There has been a 5 per cent. increase in non-manual staff this year.

I shall give some examples of planned expenditure for 1984-85. Expenditure on parks, planning, refuse, highways, transport and environmental health amounts to £31,769,000, which is £111·60 per head. The average spending for any local authority similar to Leicester is £78·90 per head. It is clear that the savings could be immense. About £9·3 million could be saved immediately.

Spending per head on refuse collection and associated activities is £9·60, while the national average is £8·50. Rate collection in Leicester costs £4 a head while the national average is £3. Expenditure on concessionary bus fares amounts to £6·20 per head, and the national average is £4·80. A heck of a lot of money seems to be being spent above the national average and I should like to know what is going on. Why should the Leicester council spend this extra money?

Mr. John Fraser: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruinvels: No, I will not.

Spending in Leicester on sport, swimming pools and recreation is £17·50 per head.

Mr. Janner: String up the Leicester council.

Mr. Bruinvels: The noise that is being made by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) is interesting. We do not hear much noise normally from him in this place, and the noise that we hear from him in Leicester is becoming less and less. It will be reduced even further after the next general election.

I was explaining that the spending per head in Leicester on sport, swimming pools and recreation is £17·50 per head, while the national average is £9·80. If expenditure on recreational facilities were reduced, there would be a saving of about £2·2 million. A great deal of money could be saved.

Mr. John Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Bruinvels: There are 18 authorities that are to be rate capped and their combined overspending amounts to £600 million, which is a tremendous sum. I give a warning to the Leicester Labour group that its refusal to levy a rate will render it liable for immediate disqualification from office and the imposition of surcharges. On that score I agree with the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). Whatever the leader of the Labour group is reported to have said in the *Labour Herald*, I assure him that he should be careful.

We must cut out all unnecessary spending. I hope very much that Leicester city council will co-operate and follow the Government's recommendations. The council could

use at least £2 million of its reserves of £5·5 million and it could freeze its spending. As the *Leicester Mercury* stated——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): This speech was written by someone in Tory Central Office.

Mr. Bruinvels: I write my own speeches, incidentally.

On Wednesday 12 December 1984, the editorial in the *Leicester Mercury* stated:

"The party is over . . . The local administration . . . do not want to understand that it is no good Government being mean with money if councils go on spending sprees. To hell with the businessmen trying to keep people in work, or householders working to balance the domestic books. Let Labour fight some by-elections on this issue if they feel so strongly."

I want to see an end to extravagance in Leicester. I want to see a lower level of expenditure that will be fair and give all people in Leicester a chance.

Labour's reaction in Leicester to rate capping has been to establish an anti-rate-capping unit. It has copied GLC literature—for example, "Your city council works for you: keep it local." Every council envelope is over-printed with the slogan "Save your services, say No to rate-capping." It has set up anti-rate-capping stalls at the city of Leicester Show and at Leicester city market. It has done so as well at various shows throughout the city.

The council has plastered the whole city with posters. City buses and other vehicles are covered with posters of skeletons so that one can no longer see out of them. It is bad enough when they are not kept clean but putting posters on them is the pits. According to the *News of the World*, Leicester city council engineer's department issued a memorandum on 4 December ordering the placing on all council vehicles of posters supporting its political campaign against rate capping and stated:

"Removing or defacing a poster will lead to disciplinary action against any employee found doing this".

That is disgraceful. Some council employees support the Government's policy of keeping rates down and they have made that clear to me, but there is the city council yet again acting illegally!

That is not the end of the council's anti-rate-capping campaign. The *Leicester Mercury* of 22 February carried the news that a record had been made in which I featured. It is produced by the Irators and is called "The Ratecapping Blues". The reader is told:

"the villain of the piece is East Leicester MP Mr. Peter Bruinvels, the man who 'nominated' Leicester for Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin's axe.

The group's latest song is all about Mr. Bruinvels. Its title: Getting my name in the Papers."

It continues:

"Our music is in a fairly light vein . . . we are not ranting and raving—at least, not until we get to Mr. Bruinvels."

Leicester is now a poster-infested hotbed of extreme Socialism. The Labour group has excelled itself in pressuring council employees. Time off was given only to those who wanted to hear about the evils of rate capping. The interests of ratepayers were forgotten. I thought that people went to the New Walk centre headquarters to do a job, not to go out striking and attending special meetings.

Many extra staff have been taken on since July 1984——

Mr. Janner: Disgraceful.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am glad to hear that the hon. and learned Gentleman finds that disgraceful and I know that *Hansard* will minute his comment. I agree that taking on those extra staff is wrong because, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there is a no-redundancy policy in Leicester.

Mr. Janner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruinvels: All staff receive anti-Government propaganda in their pay packets. Staff were asked to wear anti-rate-capping badges and they were all told to write to their Member of Parliament. I received 161 letters in favour of rate capping and 21 against, 11 of whom were not even my constituents, which is perhaps not surprising.

I quote just a few extracts. Mr. R writes:

"It would be very interesting to know just how many people in this City pay their own full rate demand."

Mrs. A writes:

"Our rates are being squandered quite blatantly where they are not altogether noticed."

Mr. B W writes:

"May I say that I fully support any Government moves to restrict the empire building of Soulsby, Livingstone etc. I also resent being bombarded by anti-rate-capping literature, stickers etc."

Mrs. SF writes:

"On the back page of this publication it urges me to write to my MP and voice my objection. I felt I must write in full support of ratecapping".

Miss R—

Mr. Dobson: This must be Mr. R's sister.

Mr. Bruinvels: Miss R writes:

"I can't think I am the only one asking for rate-capping for Leicester. Not before time."

Mr. C writes:

"No to rate capping is a farce—especially the door to door canvassing asking people to put their names on a petition. The canvassers are putting names and addresses to the petition of people we don't even know."

Finally, the *Leicester Mercury* published the following comment from an "Irate Ratepayer"——

Mr. Dobson: This must be Mr. B.

Mr. Bruinvels: He says:

"Fewer and fewer people these days pay the full rates. It is easy to vote for a high-spending council when one is on the receiving end—far more difficult to find the money to cover this ever-increasing cost."

Another writes:

"How they love to spend other people's money.

The council always seems to get their priorities back to front. If only they played the game they wouldn't be rate-capped."

Tremendous scare tactics have been used. On 25 January more than 30 mothers and their children came to my surgery. Many of the children were under 10. Those mothers claimed that Leicester's children would lose their play areas, but there was no proof. Last Thursday, on 21 February, there was a day of action in Leicester followed by a lobby of Members of Parliament. I met more than 60 people from the voluntary group sector, who were full of fears for the future. Those fears were engendered by Labour. There may be too many voluntary groups in Leicester, but to withdraw for the day, which is what those people intended to do, is no way of winning friends.

On 20 February, no rate had still been set. Leicester city council has grossly mismanaged public money and has put enormous sums into projects which are of no benefit to the majority of ratepayers. I have already given some examples. No incentive or encouragement is given by the city council so that people can help themselves. Despite all the money that has been spent, there is no

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encouragement to help people stand on their own two feet. In my opinion, ratepayers would prefer more choice over how their rates are spent. They do not want their money to go in handouts to a party political PR exercise. When the money has run out as a result of these pathetic PR schemes, the council will no doubt claim that they have a frightful, uncaring Government simply because there is no money left in the coffers to fund its play groups.

Although children have no votes, it is clear that the council is trying to buy votes, particularly the ethnic vote. When no money is left, it will tell old people, "Of course, the city council wants more money," when it really wants to control and manage people's lives, but only in a way which suits it, and that will cost money.

I shall support the order. That will come as no surprise, because I want to see a reduction in rates in that city. I want the public to have the right to choose how they spend their money.

9.17 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I have changed my speech about four times in the past five hours, but even so I could still speak at length. I have been appalled at some of the comments that have been made by Conservative Members. Instead of justifying cuts in the rates, they have made it clear that in their opinion there are too many voluntary services and too many people looking after those in need. They suggest that ratepayers would like to get rid of most services, but by no stretch of the imagination is that the view in my constituency.

The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) suggested that some people could not understand economic realities. Is he suggesting that I should tell an old man who has suffered three strokes that he cannot remain in hospital because of NHS cuts? Is he suggesting that I tell that person that he cannot have an old people's home because of cuts in social services? Am I supposed to say, "You must understand, old man, that this is economic reality"? Will that old person go away and die happy in his bed in the knowledge that someone knows what economic realities are all about? Do I blame economic realities when I speak to a single parent with no accommodation or to council house tenants whose repairs have not been carried out because of the revenue consequences of cuts in housing grant?

At the same time as I am told to speak of economic realities, the Government can blandly invest millions of pounds in weapons of destruction. There is no way in which I can meet people at my surgeries and speak of economic realities as though their lives are not as important as some of the Government's policies. If the Government cannot run the economy and look after those in need, instead of those who have greed, they should not be in office.

I have been a Sheffield ratepayer for many years. I have never grumbled about that, even when I was unemployed for a considerable time. I know that rates in Sheffield are used to care for people in need.

I was appalled by the Secretary of State, who during his speech did not try to justify rate capping but made snide remarks about city councils that are doing their best to resist this pernicious legislation. He never once justified the assumptions on which rate capping is based, or the levels that he has set for places such as Sheffield. He said that if the Government did not act, the rates were likely to soar. Some hon. Members said that they would go sky high. The Government should have made that point when we talked about the rates that we are now experiencing in the industrial urban areas. The rates would not be at this high level if the Government had not inflicted tremendous penalties during the past few years.

Local authorities have been robbed to pay for the mismanagement of the national economy. The House spends more time interfering with local government than dealing with the real issues of unemployment, the falling pound, our dying industry and our crumbling infrastructure. We shall have another debate this week about local government when, instead, the Government should be getting down to the job for which they were elected and which they promised to do, that is, of putting the country back on its feet.

It has been said that high rates have caused unemployment and job losses, yet plenty of proof has been sent to the Government that that is not the case, and my right hon. and hon. Friends have already made it clear that if industry goes to areas of low rates, rents are increased and the industries are no better off. Industrial decline and the national illness that we have experienced since the Government came to power have nothing to do with rates. They are caused by a general malaise and a lack of confidence in the administration of the nation.

Labour local authorities provide good services and create wealth. In Sheffield the city council employs 32,000 people, that is, it provides more than 20 per cent. of all jobs in Sheffield. Moreover, the council employees and families spend much of their income in Sheffield, which provides a further 5,500 jobs. The city council spends more than £24 million on purchases and services from local companies, which preserve at least 1,200 jobs in the city. The council's capital programme for Sheffield is £34 million and, therefore, provides jobs and profits for local building and civil engineering firms.

To cut rates and supposedly remove a few jobs in Sheffield will not cure the problem. The Secretary of State will make matters worse. He will merely put more people on the dole. Rate capping will stop councils, such as Sheffield, helping local industries with grants and investments, and providing business libraries, public health facilities and advice. It will stop the city council giving information to women and ethnic minorities. From what Conservative Members have said, it seems that they believe that women and ethnic minorities should not be helped and encouraged. I hope that the city council will continue to do its best for women and ethnic minorities, especially those in the lower paid sector whose livelihoods depend on the city council, not on private business.

The council's spending has not risen. Some hon. Members said that council house spending has continued to rise totally unchecked, but that is not true. The Government's penalties have caused great problems for rates. In Sheffield, spending has not increased in real terms during the past four years, yet we still have high rates. Despite the threat of rate capping, the city council must spend more on those services, because it has 2,000 acres of derelict industrial land and 2,000 pre-1939 houses that need substantial improvement. The family and clinical service must give much more help to people in need, and we need 8,000 new houses in the area.

We do not need the reduction of the rate support grant to local authorities with which we are presented today.

Sheffield has already suffered disproportionately. Its grant entitlement for 1985-86 is £92·6 million, which is a reduction of £10 million in real terms from 1984-85. As I said in an earlier debate on the grant-related expenditure assessment, Sheffield has suffered tremendously as a result of legislation introduced by the Government.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the local authority in Sheffield has made the biggest shambles of any city in the United Kingdom? I was a resident of Sheffield, and for many years I have been appalled by what the local authority has done. I cannot understand his singing the praises of Sheffield when all that commends it are two good football teams.

Mr. Michie: I do not believe that the Sheffield authority has made a shambles of anything. One of its successes was when the hon. Gentleman left the area.

We are debating a serious matter. It is not just a political argument; the Opposition have genuine fears about the problems that will be caused if the legislation is enacted. Massive inroads will be made into services, and in Sheffield the education budget will be cut by about £6·68 million in a full year. That is a tremendous burden for any local authority. More than £300,000 will be cut from recreation services at a time of high unemployment, when recreation is the only thing that the city can offer to the unemployed. The order will have a drastic effect upon services to the elderly. The city cannot place old people in proper accommodation because of the economic restraints upon it.

The most desperately needed services are those of home help and home wardens, which are under-resourced. In 1983-84, 37 extra home helps were appointed; in 1984-85, only 16 were appointed, against a background of an increasing elderly population. By 1995, there will be a 75 per cent. increase in Sheffield of people aged more than 85. Those services must be paid for, and it is no good talking about economic reality. The reality is that those people have worked all their lives and now expect some love, care and accommodation in return. We cannot provide that if we are to be penalised every time we provide the services that they request. I say, "request" because they are gentle folk who do not demand services. However, they have a fundamental right to those services, which the city council would give them if only the Government would get off its back.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) said that he had received only 15 letters against rate capping. I have not counted all the letters that I have received from my constituents, including school children, the elderly——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): And from ratepayers.

Mr. Michie: Most of my constituents who live in their own houses are ratepayers.

Mr. Dickens: Very few.

Mr. Michie: I am sure you know more about the constituency of Sheffield, Heeley than I do. It seems that you know more about everything than anyone else does.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Michie: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I have had one letter from a ratepayer who is a business man, and I know that the Conservative party is always impressed by business men. It says:

"I am a Sheffield business man. I am happy to pay my rates since I see the tax, combined with the diminishing Central Government Support Grant, put to use. The schools, the care for the elderly, the subsidised public transport, the industrial endeavours of the City Council and the attempts to provide adequate housing to our citizens all get my approval and elicit my gratitude . . . My rates are high"——

Mr. Dickens: What is his company?

Mr. Michie: He is in new technology, one of your favourites.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not keep bringing the Chair into all this.

Mr. Michie: The letter continues:

"My rates are high — and it seems to me that there is wealth creation in their expenditure."

That is the city council.

"That makes the rate bill one of my most cost effective items of annual expenditure. I do not want it removed."

He gave me permission to broadcast that where I think fit.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): He is hoodwinking the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Michie: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but he does not believe anything if he does not like the end product.

This order is another retrograde step for democracy, and I have no doubt, when people suggest that we have a little by-election to test the water, that any such by-election would be welcome in Sheffield. In the next district election, whatever the district council does with rates, I can expect that, as we do not have many more seats to win from the Conservatives, we may get the last one or two.

9.31 pm

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): The Secretary of State criticised the London borough of Haringey and I wish to answer him. Before I do that, I shall answer some of the points made by Conservative Members about what they call an astronomical increase in the level of rates. They then go on to mention the authorities that they represent. Of all the figures that have been mentioned so far in the debate, none shows an increase as great as the Government's increased spending on social services, on their welfare aggregates. As the numbers of unemployed involved who are entitled to social security benefit of one kind or another, and particularly unemployment benefit have increased so the aggregates have increased. They have increased at a far greater rate than any of the figures quoted by Conservative Members about local authorities.

One criticism that has been made two or three times concerns the schedule. Hon. Members have made comparisons between the poundage rates for each local authority set out in the order, but there is no relationship between those rate poundages. They do not show the level of services provided by each authority. The Secretary of State criticised the rate poundage of 268p permitted for the London borough of Haringey. The criticism is that that is an astronomical multiple of the 25p for the city of Leicester. However, there is no relationship between these figures because the rating values are so different. One of the historical problems suffered by Haringey, as it established its identity following the removal of the

[Mr. Norman Atkinson]

London county council, is the high rating base and low rating values set in that borough. That means that, of necessity, there must be a higher rate poundage and that is the reason for these figures.

It is quite wrong to refer to the borough of Haringey as the highest-rated borough in the country when it is not. Certainly its expenditure is not the highest, although it has a proud record of providing a first-class service to a borough which experiences many problems and suffers a great deal of deprivation. I hope that we shall not have repeated references to rate poundages, because it is wrong to make comparisons on that basis.

The Secretary of State referred directly to the borough of Haringey and talked about the millions of pounds overspend which, he said, the borough drifted into erroneously and that it was not until the district auditor pointed out that the overspend was occurring that the borough tried to remedy it. That is not true.

I refer the House to the correspondence about the overspend. The history is quite different. According to his own Department, on Tuesday 19 February the Secretary of State announced the revised rate for Haringey of 268p. That represented a rise of 16·5 per cent. in place of what was then to be a cut of 3·5 per cent. The basis on which that figure of 268p was arrived at related to a grant loss in penalty in respect of the 1984-85 overspend of £6·9 million. The reason why that overspend occurred is that a broad assessment made by the district auditor was that the borough had overclaimed a housing subsidy of £3·6 million over three and a half years.

It was curious that the Secretary of State referred to that because, over those three and a half years, there was an audited account with the district auditor approving each claim. It is only now that that overclaimed housing subsidy has been discovered. But, having discovered that there was an overclaim of £3·6 million, the Minister said that there was a grant loss and penalty on the repayment of that £6·9 million overspend of about £11·5 million.

That is a breathtaking revelation. First, there was the complaint that the authority overspent £6·9 million. Then the Minister complained that that amounted to £18·4 million which must be a first charge on next year's rate. Then he said that he had to alter his own figures to accommodate that statutory obligation. That is an astounding sequence of events.

To compound that libel against the authority, the right hon. Gentleman comes to the House and tries to justify his criticism. The first charge which is now £18·4 million less a rate fund balance of £2 million, making a net increase to be found of £16·4 million, is recognised by the Minister as resulting from past errors now discovered by an auditor —errors which the local authority had no knowledge of half-way through this financial year.

The Minister said that Haringey authority had been absolutely incompetent in not remedying the fault, although it had no knowledge of it. Previously, at the beginning of each financial year the auditors authorised the claims for housing subsidy. Haringey authority had assumed that everything was in order. It was not until half way through the financial year that this over claim came to light. That is why the Secretary of State has had to revise the original figures. He knows that the over claim becomes the first charge upon next year's rate. The Secretary of State owes an apology both to the House and to Haringey authority for his criticism of alleged incompetence.

The Secretary of State referred also to the alleged cuts that had been made. However, it is interesting to look at the figures. The Secretary of State says that we ought not to be too obsessed with percentages because they do not mean much to most people; why not, therefore, talk about money? I shall answer his point by talking about money. In 1979-80, Haringey authority received £41 million in rate support grant. If that figure were to be indexed, the rate support grant for this year should be £76 million. However, all that Haringey is being offered is about £52 million, which represents a shortfall in cash terms, not in percentage terms, of £24 million. That is the amount of money that the Government will not make available to Haringey.

The Government deny that they are trying to cut local authority services but their claim is answered by the fact that they are paying much less towards the cost of those services. Put another way, in 1979-80 each resident in the borough of Haringey received £201 in rate support grant from the Government. If that sum were to be indexed at today's prices, it would amount to £305. However, Haringey will not receive anything like that amount of money. I am told that on the 1979-80 figure there will be a shortfall for the coming year of about £118 per head. In order for services to attract subsidies equivalent to those received in 1979-80, every resident in the borough ought to receive £373. That is not juggling with percentages or attempting to deceive with fictitious figures. The money that the Government have taken away from the authority has of necessity resulted in the rate increase to which the Secretary of State referred.

We can assume that there are now 204,000 people in Haringey, as there were in 1979-80. I have made my calculations on that basis. The Government are now paying much less money in real terms. That is the measure of the cuts that they are imposing upon the services to be provided by Haringey

Because of what is happening elsewhere in the economy there is deprivation, and unemployment is now above 17 per cent. That is a tremendous figure when one thinks of the wealthy people who live at one end of the borough. There is an enormous difference between the income and job opportunities of those who live at the western end of Haringey compared with the eastern end. Highgate and parts of Green lanes have 100 per cent. employment. That is a big difference from the situation in Tottenham at the east end of the borough.

I hope that the Secretary of State will withdraw some of his allegations against the authority. I hope that he will apologise for talking about incompetence. I hope that he will recognise that it is his Department and the district auditor who made all the mistakes in the past. Their incompetence caused the deficit in the first place. I hope that there will be some recognition of that fact when the Minister replies.

9.46 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The issue at stake in the rate order that we are debating is fundamental to the future of many things in Britain. What we are really debating is the arrogance of Government and the Secretary of State in their treatment of local authorities.

Ever since the Government came to power in 1979 they have been obsessed with attacking local authorities, local authority workers and, through them, those who receive local authority services. At every turn they have refused to recognise the needs of people in poor areas.

It is no accident that the rate-capping order that we shall vote on tonight will affect the poorest parts of Britain. It will not affect the wealthy home counties, south coast towns or county towns. It will affect the poorest inner city areas of Britain and is a direct attack on the poorest people.

When Conservative Members make their litany of criticism of local government, most of it inaccurate, culled from the pages of local newspapers and based on second-hand ignorance, they demonstrate their contempt for the very people who depend and rely on local authority services. How many of them care about whether elderly people will have warden-assisted flats to move into should they become disabled? How many of them, despite their lectures to local authorities on abiding by the law and to everybody else on law and order, will do anything about local authorities that are forced to break the law when they are unable to fulfil their obligations under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act or the statutory provisions for the homeless?

That is the degree of contempt that Conservative Members are showing to the House tonight. They are showing in a most contemptible way a long process that has developed since 1979, first, of admonishing local authorities, secondly, of cutting rate support grant to local authorities, thirdly, of penalising local authorities for attempting to spend money at the level that is required, and, fourthly, of taking statutory action against local authorities. They are, in effect, destroying the effect of elections that took place in 1982 and the basis of local government legislation.

The hon. Members for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) who, from a sedentary position, are mouthing rubbish, are both failed ex-members of Haringey council. The hon. Member for Bury, North spent a short time on the council before resigning reluctantly, having been elected to the House. We later found out that he resigned reluctantly because the seat that he vacated, causing a by-election, was won by the Labour party, never having been won by Labour before in the 90 years of its existence. That reflects great credit on the work done by the hon. Member for Bury, North on Haringey council.

I have spent nine years on a local authority and I am proud to be sponsored in the House by the National Union of Public Employees, which represents several hundred thousand local authority employees.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Does NUPE pay the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Corbyn: No, NUPE does not pay me. It sponsors me in the House and I am proud to be sponsored by the union, because of the work done by its members in vital social services. The order is a threat to their jobs.

I ask Conservative Members to put themselves in the shoes of a local councillor. Tory Members mouth platitudes about efficiency, privatisation and what they would do, but they know that every councillor in a rate-capped authority faces the choice of standing by the people who elected him and by what he said at the 1982 elections or bowing down to the arrogance of the Secretary of State and the Government.

If Islington council had its rate support grant restored to the level that existed when the Labour Government went out of office—a level which I thought was inadequate—and the council put forward the budget that it intends to propose on 7 March there would be a 40 per cent. cut in rates for the people of Islington. The Government refuse to discuss that figure because they know that the real cause of the problems of Islington, Haringey and all the other rate capped authorities is the Government's stealing of money from the poorest people in inner city areas. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am having some difficulty in hearing the hon. Gentleman because of the chatter across the Chamber.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Protected by the establishment.

Mr. Corbyn: If the hon. Member for Bury, North has anything useful to say from his long experience of one year in local government, I shall be happy to give way to him.

Islington council will be proposing a budget of about £94 million on 7 March. It might be asked how the council arrived at that figure. The budget reflects the needs of a poor borough with an ever-increasing number of elderly people and increasing demands for pre-school play provision and for simple, basic services that many people desperately need.

The Government have decreed that Islington's budget should be £85·6 million—a cut of £8·4 million. Did they arrive at that figure because the Secretary of State has an intimate knowledge of the Finsbury Park area, the Mayville estate, the Bemerton estate, life around the Angel, the need for housing repairs, the waiting lists for day centres for the elderly, the needs of the handicapped and disabled and the needs of women in the borough? Or is that £85·6 million an arbitrary figure, based on an arbitrary assessment, as a means of attacking a Labour-controlled council?

Many people in my borough and others believe that the Secretary of State has done nothing less than pursue a vendetta against a number of local authorities — a vendetta in the House and in the national press that has often been parroted by the local press. When the budget is discussed by Islington council on 7 March, many people will be inside and outside the town hall, and taking part in meetings, rallies, marches and demonstrations. They will show that the people of the borough have rumbled the Secretary of State, and that they understand that the purpose of the legislation is quite simply to destroy many of the services, and the jobs that go with them.

The right hon. Gentleman has succeeded in creating an alliance between those who rely on council services, those who are employed by the council and those who work in local industry. They are all quite capable of seeing that if £8·4 million is taken out of the local economy it will have a devastating effect. The Government propose effectively to dismiss almost 1,000 council employees in order that the services so desperately needed are not provided.

Will the Secretary of State think for one second about the logic of sacking someone who is employed as a home help and of sending her to queue up at the DHSS, while the person who relied on that home help lives alone and in fear? That will be the result of cuts in social service budgets. In putting forward and debating that budget on 7 March, many local people, including councillors,

[Mr. Corbyn]

myself, and I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) will be saying that inadequate provision is made even now for many things in the borough. By 1993 there will be a 20 per cent. increase in the number of people aged over 75 living in the borough. At present, 10 per cent. of all households consist of single elderly people.

There are five day centres providing important facilities and lunches. In addition to the 285 people who use the day centres, there are a further 500 who drop in. Just as there are many people who rely on meals on wheels, many rely on the dial-a-ride service. Conservative Members might find all that rather funny, but the disabled people who rely on the dial-a-ride service to get around know that they will be prisoners in their own homes if it disappears. They will be confined to their homes without any chance of getting out and with no support from the social services. They will be assigned to a life of misery and solitude by Government action and decision.

Let us look at the other end of the scale and at the provision for the under-fives in the borough. Between 1971 and 1981 there was a 22 per cent. increase in demand for under-five provision. There are 630 children in the borough who use under-five day centres. There are a further 500 on the waiting list. Indeed, it is not even easy to get on the waiting list. Conservative Members might not understand that if the council closed any of the day centres or lost any of that nursery provision it would be mainly the women who suffered. They would not be able to go out to work, to look for a job, to pursue other interests or to fulfil themselves in any way, because they would be stuck at home—often in high-rise flats—looking after their small children. That would be the effect of cutting under-five provision, as Conservative Members know very well.

In 1982 the people of Islington voted on a very carefully prepared, worked-out and costed manifesto. That manifesto was put to the people of the borough and the Labour party gained 51 out of 52 seats on Islington council. The very large mandate thus secured demonstrated that the people of Islington strongly supported that manifesto. We now have a Government who are hell-bent on a strategy of destroying the democracy that elected that council and of attacking democracy in every other local authority. But the Government have created a unity of opposition to them which is very powerful and will ultimately defeat them.

Recently, the London Labour party held a special policy conference to discuss the issues of rate capping and its effects on local government. Among the decisions taken was a call on Labour councils to

"construct their budgets for 1985-86 in accordance with local wishes, but ensuring the maintenance of existing services and jobs and recognising the growing needs of their communities, and more particularly of those sections of the community worst hit by Tory economic and social policy. In particular, there should be a rent freeze for 1985-86."

Conservative Members must recognise that there is tremendous support for the policies of opposition to rate capping. The people who oppose rate capping realise that it is a fundamental nail in the structure of local government democracy. All we hear from Conservative Members is, "Give the business men the vote". They have the vote wherever they happen to live. Are the Conservatives prepared to take the logic of their argument a step further and say that those who do not pay taxes are not entitled to a vote in parliamentary elections? Are they really saying that the only people who should have a say in democracy are those with money and those who pay for particular things? That is the prospect held out by the order. We are witnessing tonight an attempt by the Tory party to destroy local democracy, but I repeat that they have only succeeded in building up the most enormous opposition to their policies.

On 7 March, when the budgets go through the local authorities that have been rate capped, they will put the seal on the alliance of local people, local authority workers and Labour councils in opposing the Government. They will also be joining with the miners—*[Interruption.]*—and other people who have stood out against Tory economic policy and economic doctrine. The only policy and doctrine of Tory Members is that of destroying jobs, communities and livelihoods on the altar of efficiency and competition, to make money out of people.

Labour Members stand for a society that cares for all its people—its old, its sick and its young; a society that recognises that local authorities have a particularly important role to play in removing some of the inequalities in our present society. I speak tonight with tremendous support for the views put forward by the Labour party and by the council in my constituency. They have created an alliance of support that will not only defeat the proposals in the order but destroy the Tories.

10.3 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The debate has been graced by two speeches from Conservative Members—and the intermittent presence of a Tory Whip—who have something in common. The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) have connections with the borough of Camden. When they stood for election there they were defeated.

The hon. Member for Salisbury stood for Parliament against me in 1979 and lost. The hon. Member for Huntingdon stood against my hon. Friend, who is now Lord Stallard, in St. Pancras, North and lost. The hon. Member for Leicester, East stood against me at a council election, when I was leader of the council, and lost. They now seem to be saying that, because they were elected to this House by electors in other areas, they can tell the people of Camden and the Camden council what that council should do.

We have now moved to an entirely new Tory approach to democracy. The Secretary of State, who does not deign to be present at the moment, appeared on ITN about 18 months ago and spoke about the wicked councils who were wasting money all the time. The interviewer said to him:

"If they do not like it surely the people can vote them out."

The Secretary of State replied:

"Yes but that has not been working very well recently."

The Tory party's approach to local government is dominated by two alien concepts put forward by two aliens—one of them being Molotov, not usually a hero of the Tory party, who said that the problem with free elections was that one could not be sure who would win. The Tories are unwilling to allow the electors in any area to determine the policy of their area because they cannot be sure that the Conservatives would win.

To match the Russian Molotov, the Tories support Henry Ford who, when he was the great dictator of the

motor industry in the United States and was asked whether he could produce coloured motor cars, said, "Yes, they can have any colour they like provided it is black." The Tories are saying, "You can vote in local elections for whatever party you want, but central Government will impose Tory policies on the council that you elect, no matter how few votes Tories have in your area."

The Tory party is telling the potential rate capped authorities that when the new financial year begins all the Labour policies will be cast aside and Tory policies will be introduced without the benefit of an election. In my constituency that will mean that Camden council will not be able to provide the services that it has promised but will have to reduce them to the standards provided by the neighbouring boroughs of Barnet and Westminster. That is not good enough.

When I go around my constituency and visit luncheon clubs and meet disabled groups and elderly people living in sheltered housing, I do not hear anyone asking for a reduction in the standard of services. With the increased impoverishment in the inner city brought about by the Government, our people are looking for improvements in the standard of public services not reductions.

The much-maligned Camden council is currently providing 950 places for the elderly in residential homes, support in their homes for 4,238 elderly, 416 home helps working for 3,870 people and 5,169 meals-on-wheels every week — which is a great deal more than was previously provided by the Westminster council when the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the Minister for Local Government, represented a seat in Westminster before he did a bunk because there was reselection in the Tory party.

The council also provides 19 luncheon clubs that are used by 825 people. It provides—and I am glad—3,000 subsidised holidays for pensioners and the disabled. What I know of the people who elect me—and even some of those who vote for the other parties—is that they are glad that their rates are spent on free and subsidised holidays for old, poor and disabled people.

This Government despise the idealism and decency of the British people — they always have. They try to appeal to the worst element in our society whom, of course, they represent. Most of the people in inner London and those living in the rate-capped authorities think that council services could be improved, that there should be a decent approach to the old and disabled, that there should be decent schools for our children and that we should be trying to look after one another, not trying to sacrifice one another on the altar of monetarism.

The Government believe that they can cast aside the views of those who live in the rate-capped areas, that they have no voice, that their elected councils were not really elected by them, that they do not represent them, that their Members of Parliament do not represent them and that some tinpot idiots in the Department of the Environment —officials and Ministers—know better than the people of Camden, Islington or Lambeth what they want. The motto of the Tories today is that they know better than everyone else. That has always been a bad motto, and in the end it will drag them down.

I am convinced, however, that those who live in rate-capped areas will join their councillors in resisting the threat to their standard of living. The living standards of the poorer people in the worse off areas are dependent largely on public spending, and that has always been the case.

The market place did not provide clean water, sewage systems, decent housing for ordinary people and a proper education for all children. Those services were made possible by public provision, and the people who wanted them were prepared to pay for them and to vote for them, and they will not be denied.

10.11 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I rise in two capacities. The first is to wind up the debate on behalf of the Opposition. The second—for which I make no apology —is to speak about by borough of Lambeth, and in that context I noted the remarks of the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton).

I hope that hon. Members will not accuse me of being parochial, because the problems that face my constituents and fellow citizens of Lambeth are similar to those that face the constituents of many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate.

We in Lambeth are being rate-capped not once but three times. Although ILEA does not receive a penny from central Government, we are being rate-capped in such a way that the choice, in terms of the decision we make about how much we spend on educating our children and on further education, is being removed from us.

We are being rate-capped a second time in respect of the GLC, although, again, not a penny of Government money goes to the GLC. The rate-capping of the GLC, and its eventual abolition, will add even further to the problems of stress areas such as Lambeth, Hackney, Islington, Brent and the rest.

Thirdly, we are being rate-capped despite the fact that in the last five years the Government have taken £113 million in grants from Lambeth. Indeed, they have taken in grants from Lambeth the equivalent of an entire year's expenditure on current services, all because the Government think that they know better than the electors and councillors of Lambeth how the borough should be run.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is talking about Lambeth and ILEA. He may know that the cost of providing a primary school place for a child within ILEA is twice that of the cost in my constituency, and we provide better primary education than that provided by ILEA. The hon. Gentleman might also know—if he does not know, he should because it has been publicised by Lambeth—that Lambeth takes £37 million a year in rents from its houses but that it costs Lambeth £134 million a year to manage and maintain those houses. It is a tragedy that Lambeth was not rate-capped before.

Mr. Fraser: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a contribution to Lambeth, I can suggest two actions to him. First, he should repay the grant that he had from Lambeth borough council for the improvements to his house. Secondly, he can remove his child from an ILEA subsidised nursery school. He can take his business elsewhere if he is so disgusted with the services that we provide.

Despite Lambeth's problems, the Government require the borough to cut its expenditure by £15 million in the next financial year, and that is on a no-growth budget. A

[Mr. Fraser]

borough such as Lambeth can save £15 million in the same way as boroughs such as Hackney or Islington, for example. Money can be saved in only two ways. The first way is by cutting services and the second is by making workers redundant.

The cuts in the amount that Lambeth is able to spend on its services flow in part from the cut in rate support grant. The cuts are not made in isolation. Redundancies of between 1,500 and 2,000 in local government are being thrust upon Lambeth. There have been compulsory cuts in employment at St. Thomas's hospital. They were imposed by the Secretrary of State for Social Services. They were made to such an extent that the governors of St. Thomas's hospital have said that the hospital is no longer able to meet its perceived obligations. Cuts have come on top of cuts at King's College hospital. The cuts have resulted in the closure of five hospitals in or about the borough of Lambeth. The Government's policy resulted in the announcement last week of the closure of a young person's skillcentre in Lambeth.

The cuts are part of a multiple assault on a borough that has multiple deprivation. Lambeth will be able to meet the target that the Government have imposed on it only by sacking employees. However, unemployment in Lambeth, as in many other rate-capped boroughs, is catastrophic. One in four men in Lambeth are out of work. At the last count, 3,000 male adults were unemployed. There were 3,500 unemployed school leavers and college leavers. About 68 per cent. of black children leaving school in the borough were without a job after many months, as were 50 per cent. of white children. Rate capping means the throwing of petrol upon the fire which has already consumed so many jobs. I have seen people throwing petrol on fires in Lambeth during riots which were caused in part by unemployment. Deprivation in the borough will become even worse and more widespread as a result of what the Government are proposing to do.

Mr. Proctor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fraser: Yes. It should be good for a laugh.

Mr. Proctor: Is the hon. Gentleman not saying that high rates mean unemployment? Surely he has proved that in his comments so far.

Mr. Fraser: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that high rates create unemployment, let him urge his Front Bench colleagues to publish the conclusions of the studies that have taken place to ascertain whether there is any evidence of that happening. The Labour party is not arguing that we should have a high-rates economy. That is why it has argued so strongly against the reduction in rate support grant from 61 per cent. in 1979 to 47·5 per cent. in the most recent settlement.

If the Government's proposals are followed through, they are bound to result in an increase in unemployment in all the rate-capped boroughs. That will not be their only effect. The Government's policy will have an especially adverse effect on the voluntary sector, which should be the darling of the Tory party. Local authorities do not have a statutory duty towards voluntary groups and so they are likely to suffer much more than even the statutory groups. As the House may know, this will have a knock-on effect. An example is given in the bulletin that is issued by Lambeth's community relations department. It states that there could well be a seven-fold consequence as a result of a cut of £1 in the scheme that is funded through the Lambeth inner city partnership programme and the European social fund. For every reduction of £1 in the local authority's contribution, £3 would be handed back to the Department of the Environment and a further £4 would be handed back to the European social fund. As I have said, the effect on voluntary groups of the Government's policy could well be even greater than that on statutory groups.

There is a detestable featuree of rate capping that will cause the policy to be resented and resisted. Its purpose is to try to compel councils and councillors to be the Secretary of State's slaughtermen while the Secretary of State takes no responsibility for any single consequence of his strategic decisions.

In Lambeth, as in every other rate-capped borough, there will be an effect on housing. We have already heard about the housing problems of Brent. In Lambeth, there are 28,000 families on the housing waiting list and 2,500 families per year apply to be treated as homeless and are accepted. In Brent, about 600 homeless people are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is appalling. Since 1979—this is typical of rate-capped boroughs—Lambeth has lost about £200 million in housing investment programme allocations as the amount decreases inexorably year by year.

The effect of rate capping on housing will be greatly resented. We have figures on comparative costs, and I do not believe for a moment that the way in which housing is managed and repaired in Lambeth, Southwark, Brent, Islington, Camden, Leicester or any of these boroughs means that too much is spent on the services. Quite the reverse. At my advice bureau—I am sure that my hon. Friends have had the same experience—I face constant criticism that not enough is spent on the repair and maintenance of council accommodation. The reason for the discrepancies between boroughs in management cost per tenant is that the problems of many inner city areas bear no comparison with those of smaller towns and rural areas.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The hon. Gentleman's argument does not stand up when one compares the rates in Lambeth with the infinitely lower rates in neighbouring Wandsworth. Unemployment is also infinitely lower in Wandsworth. As for housing maintenance, Lambeth has a grossly inadequate and inefficient direct labour organisation while Wandsworth applies its money efficiently by using independent contractors.

Mr. Fraser: That is just ignorant propaganda pumped out by Tory Central Office. Even the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will bear this out. When Rowton house was deprivatised, he was prepared to give Lambeth about £2 million if that accommodation could be brought back into use for the single homeless within two months. Using a judicious combination of private contractors and direct labour we managed to do that. We are a practical borough and we recognise that there is a place for private contractors as well as direct works. The figures for homelessness, deprivation and the rest show that there is no comparison between an area like Wandsworth and an area like Lambeth.

All the rate-capped boroughs will also suffer in the way in which they deal with associated services. In my borough —I do not think this is unusual—more than 50 per cent. of the population receive housing benefit. By no means all of them are council tenants. Many are private tenants or owner-occupiers. I must admit that I have sometimes criticised the local authority's performance in this respect. Because of the numbers and the frequent changes in benefit regulations the administration, if not actually chaotic, has taken far too long.

If councils are to carry out the statutory duties forced upon them by central Government they must take on more employees. The Government are forcing authorities to break the law. In respect of their housing obligations, many authorities are becoming recidivist criminals. Questions to the Home Office and the Attorney-General will reveal the number of local authorities convicted in magistrates courts of criminal offences in terms of failure to carry out repair obligations. That criminal recidivism and neglect of duty will become even worse if rate capping is implemented.

The trouble is that we have rate capping without any Conservative Member being prepared to take any responsibility for any service. What will happen to my 40,000 pensioners, to the 5,000 people in Lambeth who have home helps, to the 1,500 people who receive meals on wheels or to the 1,700 who attend luncheon clubs and day centres? Conservative members are not prepared to take the responsibility. They want to force local councillors into taking the dirty end of the job.

One of the reasons for an expansion in expenditure in many Labour boroughs is that they have taken the Government's word seriously. They have taken the mentally ill and severely disabled out of institutions and put them back into the community. But that is not cheap. It costs a lot of money. Compassion does not come on the cheap, but the Secretary of State thinks that it does. When a person comes out of a mental institution, he sometimes needs family attention for 24 hours a day. Of course, we provide expensive facilities, such as a day centre or holiday centre, so that from time to time parents or relatives can have some relief. That costs money, but the Secretary of State, Minister of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretary are not prepared to say which of those services should be cut. They leave local authorities to take that responsibility within the general level of rate capping.

I understand that the Minister for Local Government will speak for about 15 minutes. He is prepared to devote 60 or 70 seconds to each local authority that is to be rate capped. He is prepared to spend about one minute per £100 million of the budgets that we are debating. That reveals the level of arrogance and dictatorship in which the Department of the Environment is prepared to indulge.

When the Secretary of State first entered the House of Commons, his hobby was to follow Lord Balogh around to see whether Lord Balogh used his public car for any private purpose. The right hon. Gentleman has come a long way since then. He has risen from being the school sneak to the sixth form bully. That is what rate capping is all about. It is not about increased efficiency or compassion. It is about bullying local authorities, councillors and opposite political parties into accepting decisions which have been taken in secret——

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): That is stupid.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. Lady says that that is stupid, but we have not even received the information about the last set of rate capping orders, let alone this one. In a glorified rate night in Parliament, we are being asked to fix the budgets for 13 local authorities in a debate lasting about seven or eight hours. Altogether we are devoting about half an hour per authority—60 seconds of Front Bench time per authority. That is dictatorship by the Secretary of State towards local authorities. If for no other reason, these orders should be rejected because of the time that has been devoted to each authority. The whole exercise is being carried out with unbelievable haste and incompetence.

Even Tory Members must be bemused. Can one imagine a Tory colonel returning to a constitutional club in Haringey, sitting down and saying, "Good chap, this Jenkin" — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] — "He is cutting the rates by 3 per cent., good thing too." Can one imagine what that colonel will say when he is told, "Haven't you heard the news? They are not going down by 3 per cent., but are going up by 46p in the pound." He will be in for a surprise, as well as the Tory——

Mr. Hayes: That is stupid.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. Gentleman says that is stupid. Did the Secretary of State put the rate up by 46p in the pound within a week, or not? Even Tory ratepayers will be surprised to know that we have government by Tippex.

There is a further contradiction of local democracy. Many hon. Members have said that decisions will be taken or rubber stamped by hon. Members who have nothing to do with the area affected, and know nothing of its problems. I would be resentful normally if people north of the river interfered with the affairs of Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth and Greenwich. The decisions about our levels of spending and local services will be taken not by councillors elected to represent the boroughs, nor by the hon. Members who have been elected to represent them, but by those with no association with the boroughs.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his argument is too completely ludicrous? It means that if we were dealing with matters relating to Scotland, only Scottish hon. Members could vote, that on Welsh affairs only Welsh hon. Members would vote, and that on north of England matters, only north of England hon. Members. In effect he undermines the basis of parliamentary democracy and argues that only those in an area can have anything to do with it. That is ludicrous.

Mr Fraser: The hon. Gentleman is confusing national Government with local government. The definition of a cocaine dealer is someone who puts his business up other people's noses. That is what the hardline addicts on the Conservative Benches want to do. They are addicted to cutting meals on wheels and school meals in their constituencies and boroughs and want to put their business up my nose, the nose of my council and the noses of my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is none of their business. These matters should be decided by locally elected representatives, and not by representatives from elsewhere. The irony is that if the rate-capped authorities comply, rates will rise, even in Tory areas. The orders should be rejected considering the time, injustice and lack of material for the debate—no background information was laid on the Table.

[Mr Fraser]

There are other reasons to reject the orders. One is that the orders are only the beginning of a process of rate capping and interference in local democracy. Even if the orders are passed and councillors renege on their commitments and revolt on their consciences, the councils are likely to be exactly the same victims next year, when balances are lower or new and unexpected commitments have arisen. Already no provision is being made for the additional commitments which will arise for many local authorities, especially those in London, because of the severe winter. Therefore, already the possibilities of rate capping in the next financial year are beginning to build up. No provision has been made for rising interest rates, which are at record levels in real terms. No provision has been made for the rising rate of inflation caused by the fall in value of the pound. Therefore, there will be new candidates. Hon. Gentlemen can take not only my word for that but that of *The Times* of 19 February. The headline,

"Jenkin expects bigger list for rate capping next year",

shows that this is only a rehearsal for what will happen next year. The article states:

"Mr. Jenkin told *The Times* it was possible that most of this year's rate-capped councils, which include Lambeth, Hackney and Camden in London, Sheffield and other inner city Labour authorities, will again be controlled. The rate-capping power is likely to be used next year against Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool, all under Labour control."

But there may be other candidates. I have figures for how expenditure has increased from 1978-79 to 1984-85. Top of the list of examples is Lambeth, whose expenditure increased by 100 per cent., Haringey, whose spending increased by 88 per cent., Sheffield, whose spending increased by 88 per cent., and Portsmouth, whose expenditure increased by 83 per cent. Three of those four authorities increased expenditure at a lower rate than the Government increased public expenditure. We should compare them with other authorities, which have not been rate capped, but which may be candidates for next year. Buckinghamshire's spending increased by 113 per cent. — that is much more extravagant than Lambeth. Northamptonshire's expenditure increased by 101 per cent., so the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) will be able to swop sides next year. Expenditure in Somerset increased by 95·8 per cent., and in Cambridgeshire by 95·7 per cent. This is not the end of the debate; it is only the beginning, and Parliament will be sucked more and more in the process of trying to dictate the way in which local government is run.

An extraordinary feature of the debate is that it has not dealt with—certainly no Minister has dealt with—the fundamental problem of rates. I do not believe in high rates, and can see no benefit from them. They are regressive, and have a much worse effect upon those with middle incomes than almost any other tax. The Government have gone into a municipal everglades where they are lost in their own mist. They spend time with the Rates Act and penalties, which have failed. Penalties have not made local authorities more efficient. The fact is that we must have these rate capping orders is a condemnation of the penalties with which we have lived for the past couple of years. The Rates Act has done nothing to increase efficiency, nor has it had any effect on manpower. As the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, the Government should be dealing with the fundamental problems of rates and rate support.

The answer to the Secretary of State's niggling criticisms about local authorities is, do not let the Government or Parliament decide; let these matters be decided by the electors. If the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) are so confident of their case, let them not put the case in secret to the Department of the Environment; let them put it to the electors of Billericay and Leicester, who can then decide the matter. Conservative Members want government by business men sending messages to Whitehall.

Mr. Dickens: They pay the rates.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. Gentleman confirms it. They want the decisions about spending to be made by Whitehall in response to the pressure of business men. It is the negation of democracy.

This is only the end of the debate, not the end of the struggle. The Secretary of State has sought to arrogate to himself the functions of democratically elected local authorities, but he is campaigning in the mud. He will get deeper and deeper into the quagmire of controlling local authorities and their expenditure.

The Secretary of State is like one of the generals who have haunted the politics of South America. He thinks he knows better than the people's elected representatives, and he behaves with similar secrecy, arrogance and, if I may say so, incompetence. As he continues to act as a dictator, he will discover that dictatorship feeds upon itself, and he will have more and more problems with which to deal. By these orders, the Government are doing what despots do: they are asking hundreds of councillors, many of whom have spent a lifetime in the service of the community, to choose between their principles, consciences and promises on the one hand, and their personal interests and those of their families on the other.

This order is part of a familiar process. For the miners, the policy is to starve them into submission. For GCHQ, it is to bully them into submission. For councillors, it is to order and bankrupt them into submission. I ask Conservative Members to do their Secretary of State a favour—vote against this order tonight, and help him off with his jackboots.

10.41 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The debate has been interesting—rather more interesting than the annual rate support grant debate. One has heard more about the details of local government than in any rate support grant debate. All three hon. Members representing the city of Leicester have spoken, and more has been said about that city in today's debate than in the past 10 years.

Before I deal with the details, I shall set out the background against which we introduced rate capping. Local government expenditure amounts to about £31 billion or £32 billion a year. That is a vast amount of money, which represents about a quarter of public expenditure. No Government can be indifferent to it, and we as a Government are committed to reducing the share that public expenditure takes of the national income.

Local government income, which we have debated today, arises from three sources. It arises from fees and

charges, from rates, which this year will amount to about £11 billion, and from grants to local authorities, which will account for a further £11·5 billion. We are dealing with substantial sums.

Since 1979, rates have risen faster than the RPI. This is due in part to the reduction in grants from central Government, which have fallen from 61 per cent. to 48·7 per cent. The more important reason for rate rises is the overspending of some councils, which have consistently rejected the Government's request for restraint, and have suffered as a result. They knew what they were doing, and they knew what the consequences of their behaviour would be. Some councils have seen their grants fall; but have not had to raise their rates significantly. For example, the London borough of Hounslow, which is a Labour-controlled borough, has had a fall in grants of 25 per cent., but has needed to increase its revenue from rates by only 18 per cent.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): What about services?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to services in a minute.

This year, local councils have in total budgeted to exceed their targets by £848 million. Some 75 per cent. of that overspend, £675 million, is due to the 18 rate-limited authorities. Today we are dealing with the rating authorities, and 10 days ago we dealt with the precepting authorities. We are dealing with only a small proportion of the generality of local authorities. Some 85 per cent. of all local authorities budget at, near or below target. We are dealing only with a small number. We are asking 15 of the 18 councils to keep their budgets for 1985-86 at the same level in cash terms as they have this year.

I know that some hon. Members who have spoken—I particularly remember the speech of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore)—have claimed that larger cuts are needed. Those cuts would not have been needed if the councils had started putting their houses in order last July. Not only have they not cut their expenditure since then, but they have published budgets that show substantial increases, and it was that high level of increase with which the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was dealing.

The total level of expenditure limits for the 18 rate capped authorities is £3·2 billion. The so-called "present policies" budget that was delivered to us by Councillor Blunkett on 4 February, in which he listed all the increases that they would like to have, comes to some £3·7 billion. This measure is saving ratepayers more than £400 million, and I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) and my hon. Friends the Members for Billeri[illegible] (Mr. Proctor), for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) and for Salisb[illegible] (Mr. Key) that the Government had to act. If we had not brought in this measure and these authorities had implemented the Blunkett proposals of 4 February, there would have been massive rate increases. The rates for Greenwich would have gone up by 40 per cent. instead of being cut by 20 per cent., those for Lambeth would have gone up by half instead of a 12 per cent. fall, and Sheffield's would have had to rise by nearly three quarters instead of being the same.

It is clear from the figures that some councils are determined to make no savings. They are refusing to face reality. The Conservative oppositions in several of these councils have already shown how savings can be made. In Haringey, the Conservative opposition have identified savings of £20 million. In Greenwich, the Conservative opposition have said that the savings can be made simply by stopping further recruitment. By setting these rate limits, we are not asking for the impossible.

I come now to jobs and the argument of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about the report from the Cambridge research project, which will be published shortly. The project attempted to measure the relationship between business rates and business jobs. That is the average effect across the country of rates on employment. It did not attempt to assess at a specific location whether excessive rates were a factor in business location. That is the down-to-earth measure which most business men will make.

Sheffield has been quoted, and I can tell hon. Members representing Sheffield constituencies that it is an absurd proposition that businesses do not mind paying rates and are indifferent to them. I quote from the Sheffield *Star* of last week the example of a firm called Arthur Lee and Son, based in Sheffield. Mr. Lee said in his annual report, having had to move his plant from Ecclesfield in Sheffield to Halifax, that Sheffield's high rates played "a significant part" in the decision to move the plant. The respective floor areas of Ecclesfield and Halifax were virtually identical, but the rate bill in Sheffield was £135,000, against £31,000 in Halifax. Such figures speak for themselves. What is important as regards the Cambridge report and that example is that this is a devastating indictment of the high-spending policy of Sheffield.

Mr. Straw: The Minister is inadvertently misleading the House about the conclusion of the Cambridge study. It was about the effect of differing rate levels on the location of employment. It found that not only was there no relationship between high rates and the location of employment in manufacturing but that there was a positive and beneficial effect of high rates where they led to increases in employment in the public sector. If the study is wrong, will the Minister explain why unemployment rose so fast and so far in Birmingham when the Conservative-controlled city council was reducing the rates?

Mr. Baker: In no way am I misleading the House, as the hon. Gentleman will see from the report when I publish it next week. The report does not attempt to assess at a specific local level whether excess rates were a factor. The example that I quoted has not increased the level of unemployment. It means that Sheffield has 100 fewer jobs and Halifax has 100 more jobs.

The level of rates is particularly acute in its effect on small companies. About a fortnight ago, I was sent a letter from Thistle Joinery, a very small company in Southwark. It employs from two to four people. It was a plea not to me but to the chairman of the Southwark finance committee saying that it was a small business, and that it had had to pay £2,500 on top of £1,600. That letter goes on:

"This demand and the future burden that the increased rates impose are going to be impossible for a firm of this size and nature to bear . . . I am faced with repayments that this type of manufacturing business cannot afford."

He continued:

[Mr. Baker]

"Cannot the council and the Government help me? I would be most grateful for any help. I would hate to be driven out, like Hygiaphone Limited, from Lambeth to Bexhill."

I have good news for Thistle Joinery. As a result of this measure, there is to be a reduction in the borough rate from 149p last year to 112p this year.

Ms. Harman: Is not small demand the reason why small businesses stay small instead of becoming large? Furthermore, the cuts in the public sector which the Government are imposing will create further burdens for small businesses and turn large businesses into small businesses.

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Lady is trying to put forward the proposition that small businesses can only thrive as a result of public sector purchasing, it is an absurd proposition.

On the point raised by several Opposition Members, that this order will hit the poorest boroughs, may I first point out tha the grant-related expenditure assessments—I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch said that he did not agree with the grant-related expenditure assessments—attempt to assess the expenditure needs of the inner London boroughs which work out at an average of about £286 per head, while those for the outer London boroughs work out at £148 per head. However, to recognise the particular social needs of three boroughs with the greatest social deprivation—Camden, Islington and Southwark—the GRE figures are much higher than the average: Camden £360 per head, Islington £352 per head and Southwark £334 per head. As for personal social services, the borough with the highest expenditure need in the country, which is recognised in the grant system, is Hackney, with £132 per head. This demonstrates that the system recognises special expenditure needs.

On the grants available to the inner city areas, the result of this order will be that rate capping will bring the spending of these 13 local authorities very close to their targets. Consequently, they will receive more grant this year than last year. The 13 rating authorities will receive extra grant in the next financial year of over £100 million. Islington, through its profligacy this year, has lost all its grant, but next year it will receive over £25 million. Greenwich, which this year had a grant of £21 million, could see its grant next year go over £30 million. Southwark, whose grant this year was £14 million, could see its grant go over £41 million.

The Government are often accused of taking grant from the poorest areas. This is manifestly untrue. The inner city areas that I have just mentioned will this year receive £61 million under the urban aid programme. Next year Hackney will receive £49 million in rate support grant, £10 million under the urban aid programme and £21 million in housing subsidies—that is, £80 million of taxpayers' money. Nobody can possibly claim that the Government are starving these areas of support.

In view of what has been said during the debate, it is important to place on record the legal position of councillors in the coming weeks. Councils had planned not to set a rate for next year, but they now plan to set a rate some time in March and then to embark upon a programme of deliberate overspending. In other words, they will move into deficit financing. I emphasise what was said earlier by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Councillors should be very clear about their legal liabilities. All authorities have a clear duty under the General Rate Act 1967 to balance estimated income and expenditure. If they wilfully do not do so, I am in no doubt that an authority's auditors would be seriously concerned by such a move and about the attitude to financial management that was being applied.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, he would expect the district auditor to draw the amount of any deficit to the attention of the authority at the earliest possible stage so that it could take urgent action to put the matter right. *[Interruption.]*

Local authorities cannot borrow in order to finance their revenue deficits. When a deficit appears, as it has done in the case of Haringey and Hackney, it must be recovered in the following year by a rate increase. If the district auditor came to believe that the build-up of a deficit had led to a loss and that that resulted from wilful misconduct, the loss would be surchargeable on the councillors responsible. Disqualification from office would follow automatically. *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has been interrupting from a sedentary position. He is a member of the GLC and will soon be placed in that dilemma. He will have to decide whether he wants to embark upon the risk of moving into illegality and opening himself up to the liabilities. I understand that he is the chairman-elect of the GLC.

Mr. Tony Banks: No—wrong again.

Mr. Baker: That is good news. If the hon. Gentleman wants to go on serving the GLC as a councillor next year, he will have to consider his legal responsibilities very carefully if he is to endorse a policy which leads the GLC into deficit financing.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) spoke at length about Lambeth. Let me take Lambeth as an example to demonstrate the profligacy of an inner London borough. One should compare it with Wandsworth—red Lambeth and blue Wandsworth. This is the tale of two boroughs. In 1978, the rates for those two boroughs were exactly the same. Today, Lambeth's rates are 122p in the pound, and Wandsworth's are 26p in the pound. Those boroughs have roughly the same population and social needs.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No, because the hon. Gentleman did not attend the debate and did not speak. If he had wanted to speak he could have been here. He will have to listen to me now.

Why is there that difference? Lambeth employs 10,500 people on the payroll and Wandsworth employs roughly half that, 5,700. Lambeth has one employee for every 25 residents. What red Ted Knight has done in Lambeth is to make the streets of Lambeth safe for council employees.

Lambeth council staff has increased by over 60 per cent. in the past 10 years, while at the same time Lambeth's population has fallen by 20 per cent. If those two lines of declining population and increasing employment in the town hall were to be extrapolated on a graph, at one point they would cross and everybody

living in Lambeth would work for the town hall. That, indeed, would be paradise in SW2 for Mr. Knight. At that stage, Ted Knight should be apotheosised.

But what sort of people has Mr. Knight been employing? He advertised for six public relations people earlier this month, at a cost of £85,000. If Lambeth is so marvellous, why has it 3,000 empty homes, of which 800 are occupied by squatters? Why has it 8,000 repairs not done? Its rent arrears are £12·2 million—

Mr. Stuart Holland *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist. The Minister is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Baker: Lambeth's rent arrears ar £12·2 million and that alone is costing £90,000 a month in interest charges.

Mr. Holland: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to keep asking questions about Lambeth when he will not take points from hon. Members?

Mr. Baker: I am giving the facts. If the hon. Gentleman is so keen on Lambeth, why does he approve of that council spending over £330,000 on anti-Government propaganda?

Mr. Holland: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. While he is making his analysis of Wandsworth and Lambeth, will he admit that, although rates in Lambeth are higher than in Wandsworth, rents in Wandworth are far higher than in Lambeth and the services are far lower? When talking about GREA, will the right hon. Gentleman address himself to the desperate needs in Lambeth? The housing stock of the 1930s and 1940s needs major expenditure and many Tory Members will not face up to that.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is not correct. The services in Wandsworth are not lower than those in Lambeth. I will gladly send him the Audit Commission profile of both areas to show him what is spent on first-line social services.

In my enthusiasm for the order and for the controls that are being placed on high-spending authorities. I admit that I have one scintilla of doubt. As a consequence of rate capping, one of the biggest beneficiaries south of the river —apart from the hon. Member for Blackburn who lives there—will be Labour party headquarters. As a result of the order, which all Labour Members will vote against, the rates for Labour party headquarters will come down by £67,825

Mr. Dobson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No. The hon. Member must contain himself; he has a lot to contain.

Mr. Straw: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No.

Two clearly opposing and strident views are heard in the Labour party about what should happen after the passing of the order—legality or illegality. Divided they stand and divided they will fall.

Clear demands are being made by the strident Left for a move into illegality. It is a credit to the Leader of the Opposition that he has not supported that view and has spoken against it. I praise him for that. Unfortunately, many siren voices in the Labour party are raised against him. The leader of Hackney council has said:

"Hackney is acting within the decisions of the Labour party conference in the autumn and we wish that Mr. Kinnock would do the same."

The deputy leader of Islington council said of the Leader of the Opposition:

"What he is doing is standing by and watching everything the movement has fought for in the past being taken away."

I do not agree with those views or with the advice given by Mr. Livingstone's deputy, Mr. John McDonnell, who was reported in *The Guardian* on Friday as saying:

"In two weeks, by opposing, by obstructing, by not setting rates, the Labour party in London could make its most vital contribution to the miners' dispute by opening up a second front against the Government on rate-capping."

That typifies the attitude of Labour Members. They are in favour of chaos, warfare and conflict. We are in favour of protecting the ratepayer. That is why I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 184.

Division No. 124] **[11.03 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Alexander, Richard	Clegg, Sir Walter
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Colvin, Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Conway, Derek
Amess, David	Coombs, Simon
Ancram, Michael	Cope, John
Arnold, Tom	Corrie, John
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Couchman, James
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Crouch, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Dickens, Geoffrey
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Dorrell, Stephen
Batiste, Spencer	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Bellingham, Henry	Dover, Den
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic	du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Best, Keith	Dunn, Robert
Bevan, David Gilroy	Durant, Tony
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Dykes, Hugh
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Eggar, Tim
Blackburn, John	Evennett, David
Body, Richard	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Fairbairn, Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Fallon, Michael
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Farr, Sir John
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Fletcher, Alexander
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Fookes, Miss Janet
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Forman, Nigel
Bright, Graham	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Brinton, Tim	Forth, Eric
Brooke, Hon Peter	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Fox, Marcus
Browne, John	Franks, Cecil
Bruinvels, Peter	Freeman, Roger
Bryan, Sir Paul	Fry, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Gale, Roger
Budgen, Nick	Galley, Roy
Burt, Alistair	Glyn, Dr Alan
Butterfill, John	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*	Gow, Ian
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Gower, Sir Raymond
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Greenway, Harry
Carttiss, Michael	Gregory, Conal
Cash, William	Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Grist, Ian
Chapman, Sydney	Ground, Patrick
Chope, Christopher	Grylls, Michael
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*	Gummer, John Selwyn
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Hampson, Dr Keith
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Hanley, Jeremy

Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wall, Sir Patrick
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo

Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Maxton and
Dr. Roger Thomas.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

European Court of Auditors

11.16 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors on the financial year 1983, together with the replies of the institutions; and approves the Government's efforts to ensure that the Court's recommendations are implemented.

The procedure for dealing with the Court of Auditors' report was set out in an explanatory memorandum which I submitted a month ago. For the purposes of this debate I wish to draw attention to the very useful report by the Select Committee on European Legislation which was published recently and which contains important passages about the report.

This is not one of the most dramatic items of European Community business that comes before the House. None the less, it is important that we consider not only the provision of expenditure for the Community but the control of expenditure and finance during the financial years.

We have an annual debate on the report, and I am glad that it can take place this year, as it usually can, before the report is cleared by the Council. The European Parliament is required to give discharge by the end of April, acting on the recommendation of the Council. Therefore, we need to keep to that timetable.

I pay tribute to the valuable work undertaken by the Court of Auditors. It has a daunting task in scrutinising the entire range of expenditure in the European Community, and it does it well. I especially welcome the increased stress that the court has laid in recent years on looking at efficiency and value for money in Community expenditure, not confining itself to more technical accounting matters. The court's role is becoming more like that of a European Comptroller and Auditor General. The British Government strongly support that development as valuable and necessary for the whole Community in the proper conduct of its finances.

As the House well knows, the British Government have been a prime mover in the introduction of budgetary discipline for planning Community expenditure. But tonight we are mainly concerned with the way in which such expenditure, once authorised, is controlled and operated. On both counts the Government have consistently been in the lead for better and more effective control. The report represents one of the most important means of improving the system of financial management used in the day-to-day administration of the Community.

In relation to procedure, in recent years we have been pressing for more thorough and rigorous consideration of the court's report by the representatives of the member states. Our objective must be to ensure that management of the Community finances is no less efficient than financial management in the United Kingdom or in other member states.

This year, for the first time, we have persuaded other member states to agree to a more detailed and more structured scrutiny of the report. Official representatives of member states in Brussels have already spent a considerable time going through the detailed contents of the report. In addition to the more detailed technical response, a shorter summary report is being drawn up that will concentrate on the main issues as set out in chapter 1 of the court's report. The British Government, with the support of other member states, have proposed that this should be discussed by the Economic and Finance Council of the Community in March to ensure that the points raised are adequately followed up at ministerial level.

As for the main contents of the report, the British Government identify four main areas of priority. First, there have been serious weaknesses in the Commission's financial planning and expenditure control in the financial year, and these have led to a build-up of unspent payment provision. This means that member states were called on to make available revenue all of which would not be used. The Select Committee has noted that point in its report, one which the Government strongly endorse, and there is certainly room for improvement on that count.

Secondly, the build-up of future commitments under the structural funds — notably the regional and social funds—has been outstripping the rate of payment. The Select Committee draws attention to the court's comment

"that the present budgetary and legislative framework does not serve to control commitments"

which mount up from year to year. It must be said that this is due partly to the European Parliament's tendency to enter commitment appropriations into the budget, even when it is clear that the money is not available or could not be spent within the budgetary year in question.

About 7·8 billion ecu in such commitments was outstanding at the end of 1983. The United Kingdom will continue to urge the Commission to put more realistic figures for commitments into the draft annual budgets and to reverse this upward trend in commitment appropriations for which no funds for payment are available.

Thirdly, we are concerned to improve the administration of agricultural guarantee expenditure. The court points to deficiencies in the system of management, illustrated by inadequate control of cash resources during the year. Again, the Select Committee highlights this point.

The Government have been pressing for some time for an improved system for monitoring agricultural payments during the financial year so as to lessen the risk that a sudden shortfall of resources become apparent at a late stage in the year. We have now succeeded in ensuring that the Commission will provide monthly profiles of agricultural guarantee expenditure, which can be examined by member states. The earlier in the year that we can identify potential divergence or overspend, the more opportunity there will be to find ways of dealing with that within the budgetary provisons.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When my hon. Friend refers to dealing with the matter within the budgetary provisions, does that possibly also mean having a reimbursable loan at the end of the season to make up the cash?

Mr. Stewart: The management of the agriculture budget during the year should always be contained within the allocated provisions, if that is possible. In previous years, where there has been room within the ceiling of own resources, supplementary budgets have sometimes been introduced and financed through that means. The only reason why there had to be a special inter-Government

agreement for 1984 was that the Community had hit the ceiling; it must remain within the ceiling from the point of view of the internal arrangements of the budget.

I should comment on the Community's overseas aid programme and in particular its execution of food aid programmes.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): My hon. Friend will know that *Accountancy Age* has drawn attention to the way in which no provision is made for the contingent liabilities of disposing of the huge stocks of excess food that is held by the Community. It observes that if proper provision for that contingent loss had been added to the accounts in 1983, a charge of about £840 million, would have been added to the accounts. Does that mean that in 1983, 1984 and 1985 the accounts have been, or will be, prepared so as to take no account of these contingent liabilities, and that once we get the increase in own resources to 1·4 per cent. it will be possible to write off all the losses which should have been taken into account in 1983, 1984 and 1985?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point about the accounting mechanism in the Community. I am aware of the comments that have been made in *Accountancy Age* and elsewhere, which derive from some comments by the Court of Auditors. To account in the way suggested would be a fundamental change for the Community. It would not be possible to make any accurate provision of the sort that my hon. Friend has described because of the impossibility of predicting market conditions under which sales from intervention might eventually be made, or the timing of them. A programme of disposal from intervention is already built into the agriculture provision. The pace and price of disposal is affected by the resources within the budget from year to year. When I tried to explain this to my hon. Friend on an earlier occasion, I drew attention to the fact that the existence of substantial stocks in intervention meant that the budget discipline, or agriculture guideline, in the next few years would be a tighter one than many supposed as it would include the cost of dealing with intervention stocks.

Overseas aid is an important aspect of the Court of Auditors' report and it is rightly an area of considerable concern to the Select Committee, the House and the public, especially in the light of current problems of famine in Africa. The British Government agree with the court that the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects generally should be much improved. Some progress has been made in these areas since 1983, the year to which the report refers. Thanks largely to United Kingdom initiatives, the new Lomé agreement makes much greater provision for assessment of the efficiency of the aid which is being provided and for improvements where necessary.

We were able to ensure that the Commission's record on food aid in 1984 was considerably better than in 1983 but there is room for further improvement and we intend to maintain the pressure in that area.

These debates give the House an opportunity to comment on the report of the Court of Auditors and the important issues that it raises about the financial management of the Community. I hope that, if I am able to catch your eye a short time before the debate ends, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall be able to respond to the issues raised by hon. Members.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have already given way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). This is a short debate and I want to bring my introductory remarks to a conclusion. If my hon. Friend is able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I trust that he will make a contribution to the debate. It is important that his views and those of other hon. Members are known to the Commission and to others involved with matters in Europe. As in previous years, I intend to send a copy of the report of the debate in the *Official Report* and an account of the debate to the new budget Commissioner, Mr. Christophersen, and to the chairman of the Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament. I look forward to hearing the views of hon. Members towards that end.

The United Kingdom has secured significant reforms in the Community's procedure for settling its expenditure plans in accordance with the system of budget discipline agreed in Dublin in December, but it is proper that administrative and financial control should be exercised in the implementation of the budget. That is equally important.

The Government therefore welcome this further constructive report from the court of auditors and we support their efforts to ensure sounder financial management and value for money in the execution of the European budget.

I commend the report to the House.

11.30 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): The motion ends with a statement that the House

"approves the Government's efforts to ensure that the Court's recommendations are implemented"

but looking at the report it is clear that we have a long way to go to ensure that the court's strictures on the European Community management procedures are implemented.

The Minister said that he was aware of the comments in *Accountancy Age* and elsewhere, but I think that he skipped over some of the trenchant criticisms. For example, on 13 December 1984 *Accountancy Age* referred to the quality of the Commission's financial statements as being

"so poor that if it were a private-sector organisation a heavily qualified audit report would be unavoidable."

That gives us some notion of the extent of the Commission's failings in the presentation of the Community's accounts and shows the justification of the court's criticisms.

The Minister drew attention to the Government's aim of bringing about a new system of budgetary discipline. That is not the subject of today's debate, but we must bear in mind that there is no chance whatever of achieving budgetary discipline in the Community unless the detailed management of the budget is carried out properly. The financial controls and accounting systems must be efficient and accurate if there is to be any chance of achieving budgetary discipline, and at present that is plainly not the case.

The court sums the matter up at the very beginning of its report when it says that the

"1983 accounts do not adequately represent the real liabilities of the Community."

The Minister cheerfully skipped over the fact that over £7 billion disappears from the accounts, partly through

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

agricultural expenditure and partly through amounts raised for capital projects which get lost in the Commission's bureaucracy. *[Interruption.]* I hear someone saying from a sedentary position, "Easy come, easy go," and the Government certainly seem happy to hand out more money whenever it is requested. Indeed, we expect to be asked for more in the next few weeks in another reimbursable loan to the Community which will disappear down the drain as well.

The Minister did not do justice to the extent of the criticisms of the Commission's budgetary procedures. I will pick out just a few comments from paragraphs 4.51 and following. The report states:

"The present budgetary and legislative framework does not serve to control commitments."

It goes on to refer to the inadequate control of the management of cash resources, blockages in the charging of expenditure to the budget and persistent delays in the clearing of accounts and concludes that it is doubtful that the Commission can fulfil its treaty obligations of proper control over agricultural expenditure.

It also refers to the need to control cash movements and says that in asking for a direct check on cash movements in relation to agricultural payments to member states, it is asking for something which is only a matter of common sense. Those of us who are not quite as enamoured of the Community as some hon. Members are not at all surprised that when the Court of Auditors asks for procedures to be undertaken as these are a matter of common sense, the Commission and the EC do anything but accept them.

The Minister referred to intervention costs and the problems of predicting the price at which stored goods will be disposed of. One understands that there is a problem and that this depends on assessing world prices. But let us consider the losses in 1983, to which the court refers. Skimmed milk powder lost 84 per cent. of its value; butter, 30 per cent.; and baled tobacco, 87 per cent. If these costs are to be included in the budget in future, one hopes that the Commission will get better at predicting the possible sums to be raised on disposal.

So far, these costs do not come within the budget. The auditors say that the Commission does not provide an estimate of the value of the stockpile or make adjustments when parts of it are destroyed. These should be properly included in the accounts. It is estimated that at the end of 1983 these represented a liability of £4 billion on the EC account.

Any budget which leaves out massive items such as that cannot possibly enable us to ensure that budgetary discipline is followed.

However, the Government claim that they are doing their best to achieve proper control and to ensure that items such as this are included in the accounts. That has not happened so far. I cannot resist saying it — the Government are incompetent in two respects. The costs relating to intervention stocks are not put into the budget, and when we consider where these intervention stocks are stored—where some sort of bonanza seems to be taking place—we are not in on that act either. So long as some advantage can be gained, the Government should at least get a look in.

Paragraph 4.30 shows that 40 per cent. of stocks of beef and veal are in Italy and that an average of 35 per cent. of all stocks are to be found in Germany. This enabled Germany to obtain an additional 42·5 million ECU from the Community. We do not seem to be getting a look in where we could in terms of the bonanza which the Community can provide.

Intervention stocks are transferred from one member state to another, and the transport costs are borne by the Community. Perhaps some member states are transferring stocks from one country to another so that extra money can be made out of the Community. The Court of Auditors decries the necessity for that by saying that the need for the transfers, the transport costs of which were borne by the Community and amounted to 15 million ECUs in 1983, is not clear. There are, therefore, other dodges going on, through which some member states gain, albeit small amounts, but they all add up, from the Community.

Finally on agriculture, I shall deal with fraud. The Court of Auditors made the understatement of the year when it stated that member states

"do not always have a common conception of fraud and irregularity."

Mr. Budgen: What page?

Dr. McDonald: It is on page 43. It is a delightful statement. I am sure that the Government are making every effort to impose their concept of fraud and irregularity on the Community so that the Mafia will no longer be accused of milking millions from the EC in big farming fraud, when, for example, returns are submitted for olive trees that have never existed. I could give many examples of fraud. However, I shall resist that temptation and say only that the Court of Auditors ends on a despairing note in paragraph 4.39. It states:

"The fact is that the Commission has not given the requisite degree of priority to exercising its supervisory responsibilities with regard to the prevention of frauds and irregularities to the extent that it has not attempted to improve the organisation of its information and has not subjected control systems in the Member States to serious scrutiny with regard to their efficiency."

The Court of Auditors is almost wringing its hands in despair about the lack of action by the Commission. What are the Government doing to ensure that proper control is exercised so that fraud is expunged from the Community? Obviously, it is difficult to assess the amount of fraud, but recent press comment suggests that it runs into millions of pounds. If the Commission returns holding out its cap for a further hundred million in the next few weeks, we shall want to be sure that the money will not go into the hands of Sicilian farmers.

There are two further issues, over which the Minister seemed to skip much too lightly. As I wish to be brief and give other hon. Members an opportunity to speak, I shall refer to the Select Committee on European Legislation. It points out what has happened to the regional funds regarding the projects involving port instalations in Scotland. It refers to the 22 firms in receipt of fund aid totalling £21 million, when only one had fulfilled the planned objective for jobs. In its summary the report states "some of the projects financed 'were carried out by firms which, in global terms, were making sizeable reductions in their workforce as part of their rationalisation plans'."

I wonder why the Minister did not see fit to refer to the importance of the regional funds being directed to job creation. A sum of £21 million was shared out between 22 firms, which is not a bad sum, with no efforts made to ensure that their commitments to job creation were carried out. Most of them were allowed to cut the number of people employed. It is disgraceful that regional funds

should be used in that way, and that although this is referred to in the report, the Minister said nothing about it in his opening remarks. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate, he will give an explicit assurance that further moneys from the regional fund will be used to ensure that real jobs follow from such investment.

The regional and social funds form a small part of the Commission's budget, although in 1983 the share of the social fund increased slightly to just more than 6 per cent. Throughout the Community, the funds enabled 1·8 million of the young unemployed to engage in further job training. That is a small proportion of the young unemployed in the Community, and I hope that the Minister will press for an increased proportion of the funds available to be given to regional and social projects rather than to agricultural spending. Such projects should be properly controlled so that the young will be trained in skills which will lead to jobs, and so that jobs will be created.

The Minister referred to the administration of food aid, which is the most disgraceful and shocking part of the report. I am surprised that he did not refer to it in stronger terms. Paragraph 10.19 states that deliveries of food aid were completed so late that, in some cases, the wheat when it arrived was declared unfit for human consumption. By the end of December 1983, some of the countries in the greatest need of aid, including Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana and Sri Lanka, had received none of the aid promised to them under the 1983 programme. Only 42 per cent. of the cereals, 36 per cent. of the milk powder and 26 per cent. of the butter oil which the Commission had intended to send as food aid was delivered. The Commission claims that 1983 was an untypically bad year and that matters improved in 1984, but the improvement would have to be very great to recover the losses mentioned in the Court of Auditors report.

We want an assurance from the Minister that the skimpy and mean food aid from the EC to Ethiopia will arrive on time and that it will be fit for human consumption —that it will be the sort of food which starving people can eat because it fits their diet. It is disgraceful that so much food is stored, expensively, in the intervention stocks, yet the Commission cannot manage to deliver the food aid on time.

The Court of Auditors report is a damning survey of the Commission's practice, bureaucracy, incompetence, omissions, and its unwillingness to accept criticism and alter its procedures. If the Government are to have any hope of achieving their aim of budgetary discipline—I do not believe that the recent agreement will bring that about—they must take stronger action than they have done so far to improve all the budgetary and administrative procedures of the Commission.

11.48 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): This is a short debate, and we shall all wish to make short contributions. I understand why my hon. Friend the Minister made one of the shortest contributions of all because, having read the report, I must say that if a British company such as ICI or Unilever had received such an auditor's report, the board would be driven from office and the company might be driven into the hands of the receiver.

We all sympathise with British Ministers because, with this huge organisation, which seems almost impossible to control, they are doing the best they can. Other hon. Members will point out other irregularities, and what is happening is a disgrace. It may be because the staff is picked on the basis of nationality rather than ability. Some of the Commissioners seem to be chosen on the same basis.

In paragraph 1.19, the report shows that one of the simplest things—the placing of contracts with outside bodies—is done incorrectly. Contracts are not put out to tender. We all know the corruption that comes from such practices. We all know what happened with local authorities when they did not put contracts out to tender. We have seen what has happened in this country and can imagine the things that are happening in the Common Market.

As the Court of Auditors says in more than one note, with a kind of despair, despite persistent criticisms of particular activities in earlier reports, no experience seems to have been gained. We should expect that experience will be gained.

I have found a few odd things in this incredible report. Paragraph 15.13 and onwards are to do with EDFs to some of our friends in the Commonwealth and the ex-Commonwealth. It shows that 20 per cent. of the payments are not accompanied by suitable supporting documents, and photocopies are submitted in the place of original documents. Of the photocopies, the auditors calmly say:

"the photocopies submitted in place of the original documents are sometimes illegible".

They send documents that nobody can read. What is more:

"they bear alterations to the data which has been photocopied."

Is there not somebody in the Common Market who knows how to use a photocopier? They could learn from this place, where the photocopying machines go hotter than the mills of war. Is it too much to expect that if photocopies are to be used, there should not be such arrogance and lack of purpose that it is thought that nobody will question the documents that are sent? They are not queried because nobody can read them.

Another disgraceful episode happened in the Caribbean. There is much potential for corruption in the case set out in the report. By the time that they get to item 15, the auditors seem to have got past the shock barrier, and are almost stunned. They use calm words about 4·5 million ecus, which was used for the promotion of tourism in the Caribbean. The report says:

"This contract did not provide for any Community checks on the expenditure".

There was a flat-rate basis for travel, a modest 0·4 million ecus.

"Moreover, two professional bodies have, under another contract, received 0·5 million ecus . . . to cover their travel and management expenses, without there being any mention in the contract of Community checks on this expenditure."

Throughout the document is the fact not that the Common Market does not try to do some worthy works but that it is done in such an appallingly amateurish way, and the sums of money involved are so appallingly large. Instead of having to come to the House for £119 million, something should be done about this. We had the Minister before the Treasury Select Committee, and he was wise not to take me up on a point that I made. He said that he hoped that he would not have to come to the House for more money. I begged him not to put his political reputation at stake and guarantee that he would not. I can give a guarantee—if he did, before the month was out,

[Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark]

we should be asking for another few hundred million. A report such as this suggests that we shall be asked for it again and again.

My remarks are not light-hearted. They are not made by someone who is against what the Common Market is trying to do. It is what it is actually doing that I am against. We have to make economies at home. We have to tell our people that they cannot have this or that. One of the reasons why they cannot is that this hopeless organisation is making such a mess of running our affairs in Europe.

11.55 pm

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): This is a debate that does not arouse much interest. That is why there is such a poor attendance here and why the Ulster Unionist parliamentary party has comprised 50 per cent. of the total Opposition presence throughout the debate.

The Minister rightly emphasised the importance of control of the European Economic Community budget. That is a theme that rings well in the ears of the Ulster Unionist parliamentary party. We want to see greater budgetary control in the EEC, but this auditors' report does not confirm that which has occurred in 1983. We know that in 1984 agriculture has already broken through the 70 per cent. level of total consumption of the budget, and we are all anxious now to see what will happen to agriculture prices in the coming month and whether we shall see any evidence of budgetary control. Within the Ulster Unionist parliamentary party there will be no support for any proposal to raise the own resources to 1·4 per cent. until there is obvious evidence of budgetary control in the EEC.

The Minister mentioned the European Assembly and its role in budgetary matters. In that Assembly there is a body known as the Budgetary Control Committee, which is one of the more effective institutions in the Community. Tribute should be paid to the Conservative Members of the committee, who have been most active in ensuring that there is some level of budgetary control. However, the evidence in the auditors' report is somewhat damning.

When he referred to the European Parliament, the Minister said that it had to give discharge to the auditors' report by April of this year. This raises two questions. The first is the role of the Council of Ministers in the discharge of the auditors' report. The second is the role of the European Assembly itself.

It is more than likely that the House will approve the auditors' report, and it is more than likely that Her Majesty's Government at the Council of Ministers will recommend the discharge of the report. But let us consider the constitutional position whereby the Council of Ministers, as it is bound to arise sometimes if we continue to get reports of this nature, refuses to give discharge to the report. What are the implications of such a refusal? I ask that question because the Council of Ministers alone does not have responsibility for budgetary matters in the Community.

The European Assembly is very much an assembly, and we in Northern Ireland more than anyone else in the United Kingdom know the difference between an assembly and a parliament. The European Assembly has only two real powers. The first is a rather important one, the authority to dismiss the European Commission. The second power is a shared responsibility: that of controlling the budget of the EEC. The Council of Ministers and the European Parliament jointly control budgetary matters.

It is interesting to note that we are discussing the Court of Auditors' report for 1983 when three months ago the European Assembly considered the report for 1982. Then, instead of automatically approving the report for 1982, it refused to give discharge to that report. The House is being asked to approve the 1983 report when one of the partners in the joint budgetary authority has rejected the 1982 report. Discharge has not been given. What was the result of the refusal of the European Assembly to give discharge to the report? Absolutely none. The Commission took no action. It did not respond to the rejection of discharge by the European Assembly. It did not, as one would have expected, offer its resignation. It ignored the European Assembly. Therefore, I want to know whether the Commission has no responsibility whatsoever if at some stage the Council of Ministers likewise refuses to give discharge to the report of the European Court of Auditors for 1983 or for any subsequent year.

12.1 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): May I follow up the point made by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and pay tribute to the budgetary control committee which at least tries, which is more than can be said about anybody else, with this budget, and especially to Peter Price, the European Democratic Group spokesman who is preparing the reply of the European Parliament. I hope that his recommendations will be fairly forceful.

The real problem is who really controls the Commission's expenditure. It is supposed to be controlled by the Council and the European Parliament, but the European Parliament has no effective power. The difficulty with the Council of Ministers is that the members of council, in the form of its individual national Governments, are responsible for the quagmires that are listed in the report. If one is the Government and Parliament concerned, one is getting a fair return on one's investment in the Community, but if it is another Government it is a rip-off and a fraud. Numerous references to national government procedures are to be found in the report. Paragraph 1.17 refers to the fact that control and supervision by the Commission of its services as well as the budgetary authority tend to be hampered by the lack of relevant financial and management information. In some cases there is no formal requirement for such information while in others national administrations and other bodies in the member states have failed to provide any, reports and returns.

That is absolute nonsense. The Council of Ministers will never agree as a whole because it represents individual national governments who are all trying to get action taken on their own behalf. The only supra-national body which can do that is the European Parliament and its independent powers need to be strengthened. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Ah, there's the rub. The European Parliament is the only body that can do it. It is no good Ministers making promises or Front Bench Opposition spokesmen trying to hold the Minister to account for a body in which he has only a 10 per cent. say. It will always be a trade off. In theory there is a veto, but if one plays the veto game other

Governments will play the veto game back. That could very well result in cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.

Reference was made earlier to paragraph 4.37 which deals with no common concept of irregularities. That is putting it gently and mildly.

Paragraph 4.39 goes through the same matter yet again in another form. When one speaks of irregularities in the United Kingdom Parliament one always means other peopls's irregularities.

Paragraphs 7.47 to 7.55 make quite interesting reading. Paragraph 7.52 says:

"The public expenditure declared by the national authorities as a basis for calculating the Community contributions under the supplementary measures in favour of the United Kingdom, is a gross amount which does not take account of revenue paid by third parties . . . nor even, in most cases, other aid paid by the Communities."

Every national Government has a vested interest in trying to get the largest piece of the action and will go to its national Parliament and declare what a good boy it is if it gets away with it.

We have had these reports year after year and no action has been taken. There is only one body that can take action on these reports and that is the European Parliament. The Council cannot do it. It has to be the European Parliament, and the sooner that that nettle is grasped the sooner we shall solve this problem.

12.5 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles). We are both members of the Scrutiny Committee and we have produced a report from which I wish to quote. As we are all, including the Economic Secretary, on the side of financial probity, there is no difference between us. It is only a matter of finding out the means to achieve the ends. On that, I join the hon. Member for Nottingham, East. However, I draw his attention to page 186 of the report where, in respect of the cash deficit of the same European Parliament, we read that 4·1 million Belgian francs have gone missing and that the insurance company did not feel that it could pay the amount requested because in its view a serious offence had been committed. The equivalent would be if our deputy accountant in the Fees Office had collared the equivalent of 4 million Belgian francs.

The matter of contracts was referred to by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). Let me read into the record the Select Committee's summary of that matter. We said:

"The Court notes also (para. 1.18) that in many areas of Community-financed activity the lessons of experience have not all been learned, despite persistent criticisms of particular activities in its earlier Reports. In this respect the Court instances (para. 1.19) the placing of contracts with outside bodies, pointing out that contracts which might have been the subject of competitive tendering have been placed by private treaty, and that there is no evidence of systematic follow-up and evaluation of the performance of contractors or of a Commission responsibility for co-ordinating practice or for disseminating the lessons of experience".

That reads like a formula for fraud. Not only do we have the mistakes which inevitably occur but it seems here, in the words of the Committee's summary of the Court of Auditors' report, that it is far worse. A formula for fraud is built in.

Of course, that paragraph was in respect of the important matter of food aid. As members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs said after their recent visit to Ethiopia, it appears that the organisation cannot organise effectively the crumbs from the rich man's table. Indeed, we might say that the crumbs sometimes, according to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), rot from the time that they leave the table to the time that they drop into the hands of those who wish to receive them.

The Scrutiny Committee has recently considered a number of regulations dealing with the transfer of surpluses from one country to another. We have not drawn the attention of the House to those relatively minor regulations, because the amounts of money involved have been relatively small. However, in view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock has said, perhaps the Committee should reconsider the matter. If the expenditure is required to move surpluses from one country to another, to the benefit only of warehousemen and transport companies, that is a serious matter.

Will the Financial Secretary shed a little more light on the discharge of the budget? What is the use of having an auditors' report if one can do nothing about it when it is highly qualified? If the discharge from the Assembly for the 1982 report was not taken, what difference does it make? We are asked to approve

"the Government's efforts to ensure that the Court's recommendations are implemented."

I do not expect anyone to vote against the motion, but it behoves the Financial Secretary to tell us with what tools and by what method the court's recommendations can be implemented.

I draw attention to a speech made in 1891 which is quoted by Mr. Paul Einzig in the preface to his important book "The Control of the Purse", several copies of which are in the Library:

"The finance of the country is ultimately associated with the liberties of the country. It is a powerful leverage by which English liberty has been gradually acquired. . . . If the House of Commons by any possibility lose the power of the control of the grants of public money, depend upon it, your very liberty will be worth very little in comparison. That powerful leverage has been what is commonly known as the power of the purse—the control of the House of Commons over public expenditure."

Those are the words of William Ewart Gladstone in a speech at Hastings on 17 March 1891. I do not think that the fact that he made that speech at Hastings was a coincidence. He made a deadly serious point. The power of the House has depended on the leverage of the power of the purse. What leverage do the Government have in public expenditure across the Channel for which the British people pay and which the House has approved up to now? What leverage enables that liberty to be maintained?

12.13 am

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will forgive me if I deal later with the point that he made at the end of his excellent speech.

I warmly commend my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for the tact and loyalty with which he moved the motion. Gone are the days when the Prime Minister was saying in what rude people would describe as her somewhat acerbic way, "We want our money back." As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary loyally reflects, the Government have declared that, since Fontainebleau, the finances of the EEC have been put on a perfectly satisfactory basis.

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

So whereas in 1979 it would have been the role of a senior Minister to pick up and tear apart this document, and to demonstrate that our money was being wasted in a very profligate way, my honourable, highly tactful and loyal Friend the Minister mentions quite blandly today that there are a few small, almost printing errors, that the Government will politely point out to the other states in the EEC. They will immediately pull their forelocks and say to whoever it may be—Margaret, Geoffrey, or even on a humbler plain, Ian—"Thank you so much for drawing our attention to that small matter. We shall put it right yesterday."

On that basis, my hon. Friend the Minister does not point out, for example, the principal criticism made by *Accountancy Age*, which is that the contingent liabilities for the disposal of these vast, unwanted and very embarrassing stocks of food have not been included in the EEC accounts. The reason for that is, of course, that my hon. Friend was one of those who urged the Commission that these contingent liabilities should not be included in them. If they are included in the accounts, he will have the embarrassment of coming before the House and asking not, as he did last time, for £120 million, or as he will have to do between now and the end of the year, for perhaps £200 million, but for even larger sums.

My hon. Friend the Minister asserts with great good manners that all is more or less well in the EEC. But one of the arguments that the Government will no doubt put forward is that the EEC's finances are properly supervised by the Court of Auditors. Politicians, particularly English politicians, do the sonorous act extraordinarily well: the rolling stuff about the gratitude that we all feel towards the splendid self-sacrifice of these deeply important gentlemen from all the nation states, and about how wonderful it is that they have so unstintingly given of their best to regulate all that can be regulated, and so on. But others may say, for the sake of argument, "As a matter of fact, all this system of budgetary discipline depends on the will of the nation states". They may add that last year the Council of Ministers agreed that in 1985 cereal prices should be reduced by 5 per cent. but has since resiled from that, and now say that the best that it can do is to suggest that they just might be reduced by 3·5 per cent. It might also be added that there is not much indication of a will throughout the EEC to reduce agricultural overspending.

Nevertheless, there is a fundamental dilemma, and that is that the Court of Auditors is a proper appurtenance if the EEC moves towards a federal state. It is a proper and necessary appurtenance if there is, say, an EEC police force or an EEC criminal law and court. But as long as the EEC is something more like an alliance of nation states, each of which is fiercely resentful of interference from the EEC, such frauds and irregularities will continue. We may laugh about the way in which the unfortunate Irishman from the Court of Auditors was attacked when, I believe, he went to investigate something in Italy, but, as the Government would have pointed out in 1979, the report shows instance after instance of irregularity. We see instance after instance of nation states averting their eyes or conniving at fraud, because they see their own nationals making a killing out of the EEC.

If there were any proposal—my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) raised the point very fairly—to set up EC police, or if there were, for the sake of argument, any attempt to enforce upon the people of Sicily the standards of honesty that are common in Scotland, there would be a revolt in Sicily. There would be deep resentment in England if Sicilian policemen, coming on behalf of the EC, were to investigate whether proper payments were being made for sheep that were being certified for EC payments.

So long as we resist, as I hope we always will, the extension of the EC into having all the characteristics and powers of a federal state, it is inevitable that fraud, irregularity and evasion will continue. It is no good pretending that, simply because the EC has gone one step towards the appurtenances of a federal state, it has the system of enforcement, of collection and of law that would be the wholly necessary—and, I say, immediately, the wholly rejected—part of bringing any form of regularity to the finances of the EC.

12.21 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am very pleased to follow the erudite and brilliant speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen).

At 12.21 am, with about 12 hon. Members in the Chamber, we are talking about £3,000 million per annum of our constituents' money—£60 per head. We are talking about a net cost to our constituents, over the past five years, of about £600 million per annum; £12 per head of the population; £2·50 per winter week that could have been spent on heating for those who have been suffering so much recently.

We have just an hour and a half in which a few Members of Parliament can speak to the issue. When we deal with any small measures, relatively important in their own right, we have a Second Reading, we have a Committee stage where we go through the Bill line by line, we come back here for the Report stage and Third Reading, and then the Bill goes to the House of Lords. Everything is properly and fully scrutinised. If money is then spent, we can form up in front of the Government and ask them to account for that expenditure. But this House has very little accountability for money spent within the Community.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was right to give us the quotation from 1891: once we lose control over the public purse we lose control over the destiny of our people. That is of fundamental importance, and we should bear it in mind in all our consideration of matters in the Community.

What does the Court of Auditors say about the expenditure? Has it been properly looked after? The Court of Auditors has said that the present budgetary and legislative framework does not serve to control commitments. We have heard a great deal about the much-vaunted financial mechanism. It is all things to all men, so that the United Kingdom Government can say to the United Kingdom, "We are going to control expenditure", and the French Government can say to France, "Don't worry—it is not going to be controlled". At the beginning of each year there will be set out how much money is to be spent in each field of Community activity. But commitments have not been controlled. There is no proposal to control commitments any differently in the

future from the control used in the past. Even with the much-vaunted financial mechanism, how is the Community's expenditure to be controlled? Paragraph 1.17 states:

"Control and supervision by the Commission and its services, as well as the budgetary authority, tend to be hampered by the lack of relevant financial and management information. In some cases there is no formal requirement for such information, while in others national administrations and other bodies and Member States have failed to provide reports and returns on time or at all."

The French, I dare say, or the Mafia in Italy—too tough a nut to crack.

I heard this morning on the radio the story of a farming couple in Cornwall who had milk and cream quotas. They were producing less milk than they were entitled to, but more cream than they were entitled to—but add the cream and milk together as milk equivalents and they were producing probably less overall than the quotas allowed. Yet because they got the balance wrong, they are to be fined. We, here, have a system that scrutinises, operates and checks up on people. What happens in Italy? Would they be fined in Italy for behaving that way? Yet my hon. Friend the Minister talks about financial mechanism that will control Community expenditure—everything will be all right in future. Is it really?

Let us see what reassurance we can get; let us hope that the strictures of the Court of Auditors will in future lead to remedies But will it? In 1981, the court drew attention to numerou administrative irregularities, including the cashing of two cheques for a total of approximately 4 million Belgian francs. that has still not been resolved. It was reported on three years ago, but nothing has happened yet. Can we really have any confidence that things will be better in the future?

Hon. Members have referred to *Accountancy Age*, perhaps a more objective source of comment on Community financial affairs. It states:

"The Commission has failed to take action to remedy the numerous flaws revealed in last year's court of auditors report, which included millions of pounds of cash unaccounted for and almost non-existent budgetary controls."

This year's report shows that the position is now slipping out of control. This year's report refers to 1983—what happened in 1984? It fell so much out of control that the Community ran out of money and we had to bring forward what are known as the reimbursable grants. That is an interesting prospect, is it not?

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 27 June good words:

"article 119 of the treaty provides that the revenue and expenditure shown in the budget shall be in balance, so it is not right to raise loans for budgetary purposes because it is contrary to that article . . .I beleive that methods other than loans will have to be found to bring the budget into balance."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1984; Vol. 62, c. 1003.]

I suppose that a reimbursable advance is not a loan. If it happened once it surely cannot happen a second time, and it surely cannot happen until Community expenditure is properly under control and we do not in future have appalling reports such as this before us today. I am perfectly happy to give way if my hon. Friend the Minister wants to offer us some reassurance here and now that until the Community financial mechanisms are much more effective than those that we have been talking about and reading about, the Government have no intention of bringing before the House another loan or reimbursable advance. I shall be happy to give way if my hon. Friend wants to bring the matter to our attention at this stage. Perhaps he will do so when he replies to the debate.

We discussed the report. If any hon. Member—or you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—had a report on a horse one might own rather like this report, would one breed it? If an hon. Member had a report on a shop in this tenor, would he buy things from it? If any hon. Member had a report on a company in much the same style as this report today, would he invest in it? Of course not.

Is my hon. Friend suggesting to the House that in those circumstances the Government want the House to provide more money by increasing the Community's own resources? Surely not. If the Minister was too polite, or perhaps too shy, to interrupt me earlier, would he care to interrupt now and say that under these circumstances, the Government could not consider asking the House to agree to an increase in own resources? He would surely not expect hon. Members to agree that more of our taxpayers' money should be at the mercy of an organisation such as that.

As my hon. Friend is obviously mute on the subject, perhaps we can go to the Prime Minister for support. In June of last year she said that any

"new increase in own resources, should it go through all the legislatures"—

it was as well that she included that qualification—

"is primarily to allow for the enlargement of the Community by Spain and Portugal."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1984; Vol. 62, c. 1001.]

It seems that that may be running into the sand. If Spain and Portugal are not to join the Community on 1 January next year, probably it will not then be necessary—the Prime Minister said as much—immediately to bring before the House a request for an increase in own resources. While there is a delay because of that, all the terrible things that we have been reading about in the report of the Court of Auditors can be put right. Then and only if they are put right, and if Spain and Portugal are elected to the Community—perhaps we can consider an increase in own resources. In view of all the commitments that the Government have given, I am sure that the Minister would not wish to bring forward a request under any other circumstances.

The monster will grow with feeding until it devours us. The Government in Britain try to control public expenditure, and that is a difficult task. There are institutions in this country that generate ever increasing public expenditure. The aged, hospitals, defence, all require great sums, and local government tends to run away with money. Do we also want a massive engine of increased public expenditure on the other side of the Channel? That is a body not of elected representatives but a Commission of bureaucrats competing with each other to increase their empires.

We can keep Community expenditure under control only by not letting it have any more money. Let it deal in a proper and fair way with the money that it now has—in a way about which the Court of Auditors does not in future have to produce a report such as this—and then we can consider what further steps to take on the Community's behalf.

12.32 am

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On whichever side of the House we sit and whether or not we

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

support our continued membership of the European Community—and I most certainly do—none of us can welcome the revelations in the report of the Court of Auditors.

I shall dwell on only one aspect, and that is bitterly to regret the way in which the administration of the food aid programme has been illustrated, and I draw attention to the summary at paragraph 10.17, where it is stated:

"At the end of 1983, quantities equivalent to more than half of an annual programme in cereals, to more than two thirds of an annual programme in milk products and to virtually the whole of an annual programme in butteroil, had still not been delivered . . . Under these circumstances, the Court requests the Commission to review the entire management system for food aid and then to propose both rules and administrative procedures for at least rectifying the defects, which keep recurring and even worsening, at the expense of the poorest countries of all."

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee, of which I have the honour to be a member, visited the Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal to see how the food aid was being administered in relation to the desperate problems of the refugees from Chad, Uganda, Eritrea and Tigre and who have fled within the borders of the Sudan and how they have been receiving food to sustain their very lives. The United States had just as much or as little notice of the need for food aid for Sudan as the Commission and it managed to deliver and distribute food aid to the western-most part of the Sudan by the time of the arrival of the members of the Select Committee two weeks ago. The Commission had not delivered any food aid to the Sudan at the time we were there although it had delivered some to Ethiopia.

It is the administrative muddle and bureaucratic procedures which have been illustrated in the report of the Court of Auditors which I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to take up with great determination with the authorities in Brussels to ensure that the food aid which the population of Britain and of the Community generally want to see delivered quickly arrives before the rains come in June.

It is no good the European Parliament and the Commission saying that it is "their fault" or someone else's fault that the supplies have not reached those who need them. The grain must arrive before June if thousands of lives are not to be lost in the Sudan, Mali, Senegal and Ethiopia. I ask my hon. Friend earnestly to ensure that he sends representatives to Brussels to ensure that the food is placed in ships and that the ships sail. They should monitor their sailing until they arrive at Port Sudan so that previous muddles do not occur in this vital operation.

12.37 am

Mr. Ian Stewart: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to reply to the debate. In the time remaining to me I shall endeavour to concentrate on the specific issues that have been raised rather than stray more widely, as I have been tempted to do so by some including my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I shall resist the temptation of taking up the future financing of the Community. I am sure that we shall have opportunities to debate that issue on future occasions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) spoke of me—I am not sure whether this was by way of criticism—being tactful in what I am trying to do. He drew attention to my comments as if I were speaking of printing errors. I said that there were serious deficiencies in the Community's financial arrangements. I chose my words carefully, but they were meant most definitely. I hope that the way in which the debate has developed will leave no doubt in the mind of the Court of Auditors, the Commission and the Budget Control Committee of the European Parliament of the concern that is felt in the United Kingdom about the management of the Community's finances as well as about the budget that makes provision for Community expenditure.

The issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) raised at the end of the debate were telling ones. The performance of the Community in supplying food aid in 1983 was deplorable. Undoubtedly there were special circumstances at that time —for example, the regulation for food aid was adopted late in 1983, so many of the disbursements were not able to be organised in time. However, matters such as quality control and control of delivery need direct and specific attention, and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, who has been in the Sudan and who was answering questions on these topics this afternoon, is hoping to visit Brussels in the near future —possibly during this week—to raise a number of these matters with Mr. Natali and other members of the Commission. I shall draw to his attention the remarks that have been made in the debate, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford with his direct experience from his recent visits.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) mentioned provision for Scottish ports. Those industrial investments took place between 1978 and 1981 when the recession was biting on shipping and ports and the estimates for jobs that should have been created were not realised. Subsequently, however, as a result of that and other cases, funds have been returned to the Commission when job targets have proved unlikely to be achieved, so at least something has been learnt from that.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred to customer contributions in the calculation of subprogrammes. The court found that in two of the subprogrammes the amount was expressed gross of customer contributions. That is mainly a matter for the corporations concerned and the sponsoring departments do not know the details. The practical effect of declaring net amounts in cases of that kind would have been to increase only the nominal rate of Community support to take account of the reduced public expenditure element. It would not affect the total level of Community support which would already have been agreed by the Council of Ministers.

A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Thurrock and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West asked about provision for future disposal of stocks. The actual accounting procedure is complicated, but I should emphasise the distinction between two aspects. The first is the long-term cost of disposal of the stocks. Not only is that difficult to estimate, but it is not part of the annual budget, which is a revenue and expenditure item, not a balance sheet item. The costs during the budgetary year are purely those of storage and disposal within that year and are covered under various headings — actual storage costs, interest costs on the funds tied up by purchasing a product into intervention and, finally, gains or losses on sales.

The Court of Auditors raises an interesting point about the accounting treatment of this, but there would be other implications such as potentially increasing the size of the budget.

Mr. Budgen: That was my point.

Mr. Stewart: I should wish to think very carefully before concluding that extra provision of this kind in relation to the agricultural budget would be in the best interests of maintaining control over the management and expenditure of those funds. I am not entirely sure that it would.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) asked what would happen if the Council of Ministers failed to grant discharge. In fact, the Council of Ministers can only make a recommendation to the Parliament, which decides whether to grant the discharge. I believe that the case in 1982 to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, when the European Parliament refused a discharge, was a way of making a political point against the Commission. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there was considerable dispute between the European Parliament and the previous Commission and the year of the report, 1983, comes under the responsibility of the previous Commission.

That does not mean, however, that we shall not press most strongly to ensure that many of the lessons of this auditors' report are taken on board by the new Commission. I hope that Mr. Delors, as a former Finance Minister with a sound reputation for financial management, will bring his reputation and ability to bear on the finances of the Community because they certainly need it. I do not intend to mince words about the nature of the comments in the report. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) referred to it as an incredible report, and in many ways it is a very serious indictment of the way in which the management of the community budget was conducted in 1983. Some improvements have been made but we shall be looking for many more.

I stress the point that I made in opening the debate. The United Kingdom Government have taken the initiative in tightening up budgetary matters, including the management aspects with which the Court of Auditors is dealing. I was asked what leverage we had. The leverage that we have can indeed be exerted in some respects through the annual budget. I have proposed, and succeeded in getting through the Budget Council, measures to reduce the extra commitments that were being proposed by the Commission or the European Parliament.

We have pointed to the fact that many of the payments provisions included in the budget have not always been spent. That is one of the specific criticisms of the Court of Auditors' report. During the negotiations last year on the supplementary finance, I was able to point to those unspent payments provisions and to say that we would not provide the money that could be found from within the budget because it was there but had not been spent. The supplementary finance would have been significantly higher had we not been able to make sure that those unspent funds were used.

Clearly there is a continuing problem——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have only one minute left and must conclude.

We have an important duty to the Community and to ourselves to ensure that many of these problems are properly dealt with. That is why we have suggested that these matters should not just go to the official representatives of member states for consideration before the Council passes a formal recommendation back to the European Parliament at the conclusion of this process, but that Ministers should also consider these matters. I hope that they will be able to do so in the Economic and Finance Council, because I believe that the scale and nature of the problems which have been raised in the context of the 1983 budget——

It being one and half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors on the financial year 1983, together with the replies of the institutions; and approves the Government's efforts to ensure that the Court's recommendations are implemented.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instrument, &c.).

ROADS AND BRIDGES (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Tay Road Bridge (Scheme) Approval Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 24 January, be approved.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Question agreed to.

National Theatre

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

12.46 am

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): When the Minister replies, I have no need for history or geography lessons. Anything he wants to tell me about the beginning of the National Theatre I can buy at any bookstall for insignificant sums of money.

I have raised the future of the National Theatre for no other reason than to get Government thinking on the National and on the subsidised theatre, and to obtain a few answers on what I consider to be important questions.

Since 1982, the funding of the National Theatre has not kept up with inflation. I shall give a few facts and figures, and shall gallop through them at some pace. From 1976, when the National Theatre moved into its new building, until 1979, the National ran into deficit. The deficits were caused by costs incurred through the delay in opening the building and through insufficient funds to run the building.

Following the appointment by the Arts Council of the Wilson committee to investigate the funding of the National Theatre, a special grant of £700,000 was given in 1979 to pay for arrears in building and maintenance costs and to provide a reserve for future renewal and maintenance. It was clearly understood that most of this money would be included in the base for future grant in aid. The National hoped that all the £700,000 would be added in the following year, 1980-81, because of high inflation in the months following the special grant, when the RPI rose 20 per cent.

If the £700,000 is included in the base year 1979-80, the National Theatre grant increase from the Arts Council from that year until the current year, 1984-85, is 44 per cent., against an increase in the RPI of 64 per cent. That is what I meant when I said that the funding of the National Theatre has not kept up with inflation.

Since the erosion in its grant, the National asked Coopers and Lybrand, a leading firm of accountants and management consultants, to look specifically at this point. It chose to take 1980-81 as its base year—the year following the special grant—which it assumed would represent the council's view on the proper base for the National Theatre's grants. The analysis showed that the increase in Arts Council grant offered was 33 per cent. and that the RPI increase 37 per cent. It showed that the increase in average earnings was 46 per cent. and that the composite inflation index was 42 per cent.

I shall deal quickly with the arguments being used against the National Theatre. It is doing insufficient to help itself through income from the private sector, especially compared with the Royal Shakespeare Company. It employs too many people, it is extravagant, it will not privatise, it does not control wages, the £7 million grant which it now gets is a significant sum and more than any other theatre gets and it must cut its coast.

I shall give the counter-arguments. On private sector income, the National Theatre aims to increase its self-earned income, apart from through its box office, through training activities, catering, programmes, publications, hires, book stalls, tours, ice creams and so on, exploitation, sponsorship and patronage. Its performance has been positive in all those areas. The publication profit this year is £215,000, which is more than the combined catering profit of the Royal Opera House, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the English National Opera. Its hiring income is rising each year, and is four times that of the RSC. In the past two financial years the NT has raised more than £1 million from exploitation, sponsorship and patronage. That is 21 per cent. more than that achieved by the RSC in the same period. I mention the RSC because somehow the Government seem to have befriended it, and made enemies of the NT. The NT has raised more than £700,000 in sponsorship and patronage.

The second complaint was that the NT employs too many people. Since 1979, 40 jobs have been removed. It is said that the NT is extravagant. That word must be taken to be relative. To some people all subsidised theatre is extravagant. The theatre aims to set budgets for sets and costumes which allow the first-class directors and designers to realise their creative aims. The budgets are finite and closely controlled.

It is felt that the NT will not privatise. Where services are central to the NT's purpose, such as production workshops or wardrobe services, its thrust has been to tighten planning and control, and to improve management. Where services are peripheral, such as security, cleaning and maintenance, the NT has compared costs with those of contractors. It contracted out security in 1979, and planned to do the same two years later with cleaning. However, the Greater London council, which is a generous funder of the NT, made it clear that if it were contracted out, funds would be stopped.

It is felt that the NT does not control wages. I remind the Minister that its wage rates are now below those of the RSC, the ROH and private contractors. It is said that £7 million is a significant sum and that the NT must cut its costs. When the £2 million-plus costs are subtracted, the theatre is left with £5 million. I remind the Minister that the RSC gets £5 million, the ROH more the £12 million and the ENO nearly £7 million.

No debate on the NT has been conducted for about 100 years, and no debate should be conducted without mentioning Matthew Arnold. In 1879, after the Comedie Francaise came to London with Sarah Bernhardt, Arnold said, after a long and well-argued passage:

"The people will have a theatre. Make it a good one."

The national theatre movement rumbled on and on. Sites were bought and sold and bombed, and when finally the south bank foundation stone was laid in its present site, the stonemason looked at it and said:

"This foundation stone needs refurbishing."

It must have been the first time that a foundation stone had to be refurbished before it had founded anything.

I wish to remind the Minister — I know that Adjournment debates are one-on-one confrontations, whatever newspapers would have us believe—of the national theatre concept: that there should be a theatrical centre of excellence, subsidised by the state, to act as a beacon for the profession. That is what the National Theatre is about. Of course it must be cost-effective, but it must also be able to put on plays with more characters, more scenes, more costumes, more artifice and more music. All of those are expensive. Without a national theatre or a similar subsidised company, theatregoers would be fed a steady diet of one-set, eight-character plays, reducing Shakespeare to that from whence it came. Shakespeare wrote about a touring company of minstrels, all of whom play many parts. What would be attractive to

the commercial theatre would be a Beckettesque, Pinteresque play with one character, one dustbin and one spotlight.

The National Theatre has, rightly, got away from that. To our pride, it has staged "Coriolanus", "The Oresteia" by Aeschylus, "The Rivals" and many more productions to vitalise the theatre, to make us proud of it, and to bring foreign visitors to our theatre and our country. The National has helped tourism to become our third largest industry. Subsidised theatre has won well over half the awards that are on offer. It is our heritage.

I have raised this matter today because the Government have decided that the National must cut its costs in tune with housing benefit, Health Service expenditure and tertiary education. If the Minister were to say, "We need the £100 million or more that we give to the Arts Council to spend on those important sectors," I might argue with him, but I would understand. At least that would be an honest argument. What he is saying is that the National must trim its sails—fewer scene changes, fewer actors, fewer plays and shoddier sets. My point is that this is a far cry from the concept of using the National Theatre to invigorate our entire arts sector.

I want the Minister to acknowledge that the existence of a properly funded National Theatre has benefited the arts of the country. The monetarist approach of cash limits cannot work. It is bad enough for rural bus services and post offices, but at least in those sectors the buses that run are run properly, and the post offices that remain servce their customers decently. Trimming the spending power of a centre of excellence reduces it to pedestrianism. That is my argument. One ends with a deficient product which removes the entire reason for its existence.

There is an argument for abolishing the National Theatre, but I say that there is none for stifling it, which is what is happening at present.

The concept of the Arts Council was a splendid idea —an arm's length approach whereby the Government subsidised, and the Arts Council distributed. One suspects that the Arts Council is now no more than an instrument of Government, with no cultural view. Arm's length when there is a tourniquet between the source and the extremity does not work.

"The Glory of the Garden" is a sound principle. Let the regions flourish. The Minister will know how much and how often I have spoken to him about the need to invigorate my region—the eastern region—and he has been decent in acknowledging it. However, in "the Glory of the Garden", surely the regions must not flourish at the cost of maiming the metropolis. It is like knocking down a greenhouse so that one can get at the cuttings and the shrubbery.

The Minister for the Arts has spoken of our "flourishing" commercial theatre, but it flourishes because of the example of the subsidised theatre, just as ITV flourishes because of the decent standards set by the BBC. If we take away that excellence, we are left with mediocrity for the entire sector. We have a Minister who is an able economist, and a chairman of the Arts Council who is a monetarist. Admittedly, one has to say in his favour that he is a monetarist who believes that if one invests £250 million in the theatre, it will be cost-effective in that it lowers the PSBR, generates employment and VAT, and saves a lot of supplementary benefit.

We have, alas, a chief executive who believes in commercial sponsorship. I believe in it too. It is a small and welcome trickle, but it will go on being a trickle until the Chancellor of the Exchequer changes the ground rules and makes it tax-effective for industry to sponsor the arts. It is wrong, and we have been telling him for many years now, to expert commercial sponsorship to be anything more than a trickle.

The Minister sent Sir Clive Priestley to look at the Royal Shakespeare Company, expecting a report with condemnation of irresponsible management, overmanning, and general excesses. He was wrong, and Priestley became a fan of the RSC—perhaps as great a fan as the Prime Minister became of President Reagan — and money went to the Barbican. I was delighted, as most of us were. Now, we need a Priestley to examine the National Theatre. It has nothing to fear. It has funded a study, with its money, by Coopers and Lybrand to look into National Theatre efficiency.

Last week, I asked the Minister whether he would look into the suggestion of central Government taking over the £2 million-plus costs for the maintenance of the building, as they have done in the British Museum and the National Gallery. That would be welcome. Tonight, I wish to put two questions to the Minister. First, do the Government want to stop subsidising art, thereby killing standards, destroying a sector in which Britain leads the world, with actors, directors, designers and writers? If they do, they should tell us. If they do not, they should find the cost, which is the cost of half a day's occupation of the Falklands. That is all that the National needs to raise its head and continue as a centre of excellence, not close the Cottesloe, renew contracts and look into the future. One cannot run a theatre without some confidence in the future and without planning.

Secondly, what else does the National Theatre have to do before it can function as it was set up to function by an Act of Parliament? It has kept within budget. It has played to 80 per cent. capacity. It has been steadily spectacular, if occasionally wrong. But no theatre can always get it right, and I, who have missed very few productions at the National Theatre, have been steadily proud of what I have seen, even if every now and again I have deplored what it has done because I thought it failed to enthuse and to entertain. But it has always been of great quality, artistically and culturally.

The Minister must tell us whether the Government want the National. If they do, they must fund it. If they do not want it, the Minister must have the courage to kill it. But let me warn him that the commercial theatre needs the National the way that any form of art needs a standard. I rather suspect that the Government hope that the National will fade away. That it will not do, because too many of us care, and in Sir Peter Hall we have a champion who will fight his corner.

I shall forgive the Minister if he does nothing else than give us the Government's opinion on the subsidised theatre. I believe that we need it and that the whole theatre needs the excellence that costs perhaps £7 or £8 a seat but is a spectacular beacon in which the rest of the theatrical profession can take pride.

1.6 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) for giving me the opportunity to put one or two

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

matters clearly on the record about the Government's attitude both to the National Theatre and to the subsidised arts in general.

I can answer the hon. Gentleman quite straightforwardly. He first asked whether the Government wanted to stop subsidising the arts. To that question I give a resounding reply. No, of course we do not want to stop subsidising the arts. As a subsidiary to that question he asked whether we wanted the National Theatre to fade away. It is an unlikely concept that Sir Peter Hall might fade away, as the hon. Gentleman quickly added. Again I can say a resounding no.

To add to my resounding noes, the Government have supplied the more important commodity of money over the last years. Since 1978-79, there has been an 18 per cent. real terms increase in Government funding of the arts. That is no small thing at a time when many other programmes have been squeezed in real terms, and many of them within my Department.

There is no question that within the pressing priorities of Government the arts can be wholly privileged. They cannot. Professor Peacock was asked recently by the Arts Council to look into the argument that the arts had a higher inherent inflation rate than the RPI. He found, taking one year with another, that that was not generally so and that there was no special case to be made for the arts in that argument.

We heard reference by the hon. Gentleman to the argument from macro-economics that in some way the arts may be a generator of such production that funding of the arts diminishes the PSBR. I find that argument a little eccentric. It was refuted in a letter in the *Financial Times* today. Assuming that one believed the complete opposite to the kind of economics that *The Times* used to argue when Sir William Rees-Mogg was its editor and assuming, further, that we took a wholly Keynesian view of economics, it would still be for those putting forward this line of argument to show that investment in the arts would be better as an income and employment generator than, for example, investment in the construction industry, which is more naturally put forward as a candidate for such Keynesian pump-priming of the economy. Therefore I do not believe that that is either a necessary or a particularly convincing argument in favour of subsidy of the arts. The argument is more fundamentally based upon our assessment of the nature of a civilised society.

I agree with a great deal of what was said by the hon. Member about the extent to which the National Theatre is a beacon to the commercial theatre. However, I take issue with the hon. Member over the extent to which the National Theatre has or has not been decently funded. There is a familiar argy-bargy between the Arts Council and the National Theatre about whether there has been an increase in real terms in the theatre's funding. As the hon. Member rightly said, it all turns on how the £700,000 is to be treated. I think I am persuaded by the argument of the Arts Council that since this sum of money was not provided for expenditure in a single year—indeed, only about £250,000 was spent in the base year, while the rest of it was spent in subsequent years — it cannot be considered as part of the recurrent grant. If, therefore, that sum is ignored, the National Theatre has had a real terms increase of about 12 or 13 per cent. since 1978-79.

The argument of the Arts Council is reasonable, but it does not lie at the heart of the matter. As the hon. Member said, the heart of the matter is the attitude adopted towards the subsidised theatre, what is now required of the National Theatre, and whether we believe that it can fulfil its fundamental role following all the pressures that have been placed upon it. I accept the hon. Member's implication that there are certain kinds of activity that it is not worth doing badly—that it might be better to cut out some activity entirely rather than do it badly: that the concept of a second-rate brain surgeon is unsatisfactory and that the concept of a badly subsidised theatre is unsatisfactory. I assure hon. Members and those outside Parliament that the Arts Council retains its arm's length relationship with the Government. It is lobbying hard in public, perhaps not with a strident voice but with the persistent and scholarly voice of its chairman, for a good deal more money than has been made available to it.

The Arts Council is not making life particularly convenient for the Government in doing so. Nevertheless, it is doing its job for the arts. The arm's length relationship still obtains. It is for the Arts Council to judge whether the level of subsidy that is available enables this great theatre, with its many triumphs behind it—to which the hon. Member paid tribute and I join him in that tribute—to do its job. We do not believe that the Arts Council has so dramatically mistaken its judgment as to require the intervention of my noble Friend to overturn that arm's length relationship and correct the allocation to the National Theatre.

What is the National Theatre supposed to do? There is a potential philosophical dispute about at least some of the comments Sir Peter Hall has made about the role of subsidy. In his diaries, from which we learned that Sir Peter quite rightly voted for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in 1979 — which is very satisfactory to the Government—he wrote that to use sponsorship for the main house work would:

"not only be betraying ourselves but the rest of the subsidised theatre and the Arts Council. Private subsidy should be used to help us expand into areas we otherwise couldn't afford to be in: children's theatre, very experimental writing, etc."

We should all welcome the injection of private money into those areas, but I do not understand the philosophical argument that in some way it would be wrong if private sponsorship could be found for some of the main line activities. It is difficult to understand why money extracted through the compulsion of the taxation system by means of the terror of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor with the law and the Inland Revenue behind him is in some way good money, whereas money given voluntarily is in some way bad money. Money is money. As the Emperor Vespasian said when he put a tax on the urinals in the city of Rome, money does not smell. From wherever it comes, it is useful.

I hope that in the search for sponsorship and for money from outside, given the tremendous good will that has been generated over the years by so many of the performances that have been put on, the theatre will not limit itself in its application. It has been raising sponsorship, as the hon. Gentleman said, and that has particularly been applied to touring and outreach work and now to foyer music. But why not use all the great good will that exists to see if more can be done for the central aspects of the theatre's work?

I also agree that there is no evidence in, for example, the pay settlements, that the theatre is behaving in an

irresponsible way in comparison with other theatres, but that does not wholly absolve it, despite the difficulties with the GLC which is being rather mischievous in the way that it is on the one hand dangling carrots of potential money and on the other laying down conditions that make it difficult for the money to be accepted and savings to be made. It must examine every cost in the way that institutions of the utmost excellence in other fields such as universities have to do.

Although Sir Peter argues that there has been no overspending, we must remember that the savings that he is now seeking are over £1 million. If he had what he says is his share of the Arts Council money—a 5 per cent. increase—that would leave him with a shortfall of some £900,000, so there must have been a coming budget crisis. We must ask the theatre, like all other institutions in the country, even those of the utmost excellence, to seek the further savings to continue that excellence and that contribution to our national life in the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

1. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of nuclear artillery in British Army tactical planning.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): The role of the British Army's nuclear capable artillery is to contribute to NATO's overall strategy of deterrence and flexible response.

Mr. Caborn: I thank the Minister for his reply, but will he tell us why that announcement was not made to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 24 October, when it was clearly said that no decisions had been made? However, in the Senate, Dr. Wagner, the Assistant Secretary for Defence, announced in its official journal that NATO had agreed that the 155mm and the 8-inch shells should be converted to nuclear use. Why was that information not given to the House when the Minister had the opportunity to do so on 24 October?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman did not take my answer. He is talking about procurement aspects, which should be dealt with in answer to a question that follows almost immediately. His question related to the role of nuclear artillery in British Army tactical planning, and the answer that I have given him is an answer that has endured throughout this Government's and previous Government's view of these matters.

Mr. Ashdown: Is not the real role for this nuclear artillery, stationed so close to the front-line in Germay, to provide Britain and NATO with a chance to use nuclear weapons first in the case of a conventional attack? Is not that policy not only morally disreputable but militarily dangerous, in the sense that it places local commanders in a position whereby they must either use those nuclear weapons or risk losing them during an attack?

Mr. Stanley: The rationale of having nuclear capable artillery is to provide a deterrent against the use of the heavy nuclear capable artillery asset which the Warsaw Pact has potentially available for use against us.

RAF Molesworth

3. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now state the total cost of the Molesworth operation; and what was the number of personnel involved.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I can give an answer as it applies to my Ministry. Three hundred Ministry of Defence police were engaged in clearing the site of trespassers; 1,500 Army personnel were engaged in the erection of a temporary fence and other facilities.

The cost of Army stores used in this latter operation was about £1 million. Other costs, including those of the temporary buildings on site, other equipment and the erection of the permanent fence are likely to total £5·5 million.

Mr. Skinner: I wonder whether the Secretary of State for Defence included himself among that number. Does he realise that he cut a sorry sight as he pranced about at Molesworth in an Army flak jacket, especially since, when he was in the real Army, he hated wearing the apparel so much that he got himself out as quickly as he could? The exercise was carried out all because he wanted to remove a few peaceful protestors, Quakers and a white goat.

Mr. Heseltine: I must concede one point to the hon. Gentleman. I took what trouble I could to plan that exercise, but I made one miscalculation. I forgot to take a coat with me and it was raining.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Is my right hon. Friend aware that money spent to restrain unrepresentative groups who are trying to disrupt the Queen's peace and to change our policy for keeping the peace is money well spent?

Mr. Heseltine: When my hon. Friend talked about money spent on restraining unrepresentative groups which threaten the peace, I thought that he might be talking about the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It would certainly be money well spent in that case. I support completely what my hon. Friend said. Had we not carried out that exercise, there could have been incalculable additional costs, which were avoided because the exercise was so successful.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State tell us what United States National Guardsmen are doing in this country? Are they being used to train people to deal with civil disobedience at Molesworth and elsewhere? Will he explain why Ministry of Defence officials were called to the American embassy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady should read the question carefully. It deals with the cost of the Molesworth operation and has nothing to do with American guardsmen.

Mrs. Clwyd: The question also asks about the number of personnel involved, Mr. Speaker. My question was related to that.

Mr. Heseltine: I can help the hon. Lady. If she looks at the briefing notes for the last Labour Government she will find exactly what American personnel are doing here on our nuclear bases.

Dr. Mawhinney: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Mayor of Peterborough, with Labour and Liberal

councillors, are conniving to hand over council property to CND, which will use it to advise Molesworth protesters how to evade and to break the law? Does my right hon. Friend accept that although that is typical of the bodies referred to, it is not accepted by my——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that question has much to do with the original question either.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Secretary of State aware that by donning a flak jacket he achieved what the emperor achieved by taking off his clothes? We can see as a result what a pathetic exercise it was. That the Secretary of State had a role in planning the exercise says a lot about the way in which his mind works and the way in which the Government approach such matters.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sorry to be boring, but I did want to keep dry. That is why I put on a flak jacket.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Has the Secretary of State had an opportunity since he last made a statement to the House on the issue to assess the cost benefit of the exercise? On reflection, what was the purpose of the expenditure? Was it not to depress dissent, as the Wintex exercise which starts today will attempt to do?

Mr. Heseltine: The Wintex exercise is designed to preserve the credibility of our deterrent and therefore to maintain the peace. I can help the hon. Gentleman about the cost-effectiveness of the Molesworth exercise. It ensured that the large numbers of people living in that area were not subjected to harassment by those who were illegally operating on Ministry of Defence land. It denied the opportunity for continued occupation and for the frustration of the Government's legitimate right, and it secured the enhancement of the Government's policy to maintain NATO's policies because those policies have secured peace. That is a peace which the protesters are only too happy to enjoy because within it they can further their protest.

Sir John Fieldhouse (Reports)

4. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what alterations were made to Sir John Fieldhouse's Commander-in-Chief's report on the Falklands war at the Ministry of Defence or at Northwood; which were made with Sir John's knowledge and consent; and on whose authority the remainder were made.

Mr. Heseltine: As with all official reports, the Commander-in-Chief's dispatch went through more than one draft. I can assure the hon. Member that the sentence dealing with the detection of the General Belgrano in the dispatch as published was unchanged throughout the drafting process. Any amendments that were suggested on other matters were agreed personally by the Commander-in-Chief.

Mr. Dalyell: Why should it be believed that it was for intelligence considerations that Sir John Fieldhouse's report did not state in the first place that the submarine was detected on 1 May? If there were intelligence considerations Sir John Fieldhouse would never have put in the first draft the true answer that it was detected on 1 May. Surely Sir John understands intelligence as much as anybody else?

Mr. Heseltine: Sir John would undoubtedly fully understand all the implications of the exercise in which he was, of course, intimately involved. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) seeks to establish that the Ministry tried in some way to change Sir John Fieldhouse's draft against Sir John's wishes. That is not the case. There is no foundation for that suggestion, and I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman continues to pursue the matter.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the majority of the British people understand clearly why the Belgrano was sunk and believe that the time of my right hon. Friend, his colleagues and staff would be far better spent in preparing Britain's defences against external enemies than in answering fruitless inquiries about this obscure historical incident?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is in touch with the mood of the British people and with the mood of the House, but I have to respect the rights of hon. Members to ask questions such as that asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), however daft they may be.

RAF Basic Trainer

6. **Mr. Beggs** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has made any changes in the specifications for the Royal Air Force basic trainer.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): No, Sir.

Mr. Beggs: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that in December his colleague the Minister of State for Defence Procurement selected the Short's Tucano and the PC-9 for best and final offers because both met the specifications?

Mr. Lee: I certainly can confirm that.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend, in making the selection with his right hon. Friends, place a high priority on the degree to which each of the contenders approaches the specifications set by the RAF? Which one came best in the evaluation at the aeroplance and armament experimental establishment at Boscombe Down?

Mr. Lee: I can give my hon. Friend an assurance on the first part of his question, but I am not prepared to be drawn on the second.

Nuclear Weapons

7. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the modernisation of Britain's tactical nuclear weapons.

10. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the modernisation of Britain's nuclear weapons.

13. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the acquisition by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces of new nuclear artillery shells.

2. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering the modernisation of the Army's nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Lee: Nuclear shells for artillery deployed in support of the Alliance by the United Kingdom and other NATO countries are provided by the United States of America. NATO Ministers have identified a range of

possible improvements and SACEUR is undertaking a review, but no specific proposals have been made. As for British theatre nuclear weapons, no early decisions are likely or required, although it is normal practice to keep under review the need to replace all United Kingdom in-service weapon systems.

Mr. Boyes: Is it not a fact that the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) informed my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that our United States allies were not considering improving the artillery shells that are deployed? However, Bernard Rogers, when speaking to a sub-committee of the United States Senate, made it absolutely clear that he wanted massive improvements to and refinements of the 155 mm shells to allow those shells to take an enhanced radiation warhead. Is it not a fact that that weapon will be more dangerous than the weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? About 200,000 people died in a year in those cities. How many will die if we start using these types of artillery shells?

Mr. Lee: General Rogers is entitled to express his views. In March SACEUR's formal review will report to the nuclear planning group on the composition and improvements of the nuclear stockpile in the longer term. The matter of the enhanced radiation or neutron weapon is for the Alliance to consider at the highest political level. No proposals have been made. There are no so such rounds in Europe.

Mr. McTaggart: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that any modernisation of British nuclear weapons, irrespective of the reason for that modernisation, represents an escalation in the arms race, which is against the wishes of the vast majority of the people? Is that why conflicting statements have been made to the House of Commons and to the United States Congress?

Mr. Lee: I do not accept the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. I draw the attention of the House to an article last week in the *New Statesman*, which stated:

"The Soviet Union is also modernising its short-range nuclear forces with a new nuclear mortar artillery and three new surface-to-surface missiles in a classic example of the arms race."

Mr. Clay: Is it not a fact that on 1 May 1984 Dr. Wagner told the United States Congress that he had a list of improvements? He referred specifically to the 155 mm artillery shell and the 8 in shell. He said that NATO Ministers endorsed all the proposals. Does that not directly contradict the answer given both earlier and later to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and others of my hon. Friends? Is this possibly another case where a civil servant was asked to produce two different briefs—one that told the truth and one that misled the House—and we received the one that misled the House?

Mr. Lee: I cannot comment on the first aspect, because Dr. Wagner is not a United Kingdom citizen—he is a United States citizen. I cannot comment on specific United States plans, although I repeat that there are no specific NATO proposals. We are awaiting the SACEUR review.

Sir Patrick Wall: Will my right hon. Friend purchase the Copperhead laser-guided 155mm shell? If not, why not, given the fact that recently it scored 10 hits out of 10?

Mr. Lee: With respect, I cannot answer that question, and I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: Is it not a little absurd that we should have a balance of deterrence in nuclear weapons which we continually update, whereas we do not have a balance of deterrence in chemical weapons?

Mr. Lee: The Government's position on chemical weapons is well known. There has been no change.

Dr. Hampson: Does my hon. Friend agree that even a defensive alliance such as NATO must continue to modernise at every level if it is to retain its credibility? Has not the Warsaw Pact recently moved new heavy artillery nuclear brigades into the forward area?

Mr. Lee: The answer to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question is yes. I agree that we must modernise our deterrent. It must be continually reviewed if it is to be effective.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that public opinion within the Alliance is looking, not for the modernisation of tactical nuclear weapons, but for less reliance on their use? Does he agree that the first and perhaps most pressing condition of that now is adequate sustainability at a mundane level such as 30-day stock levels of ammunition, spare parts and petrol? Will he assure the House that he and his colleagues are meeting SACEUR's anxieties on that matter.

Mr. Lee: Sustainability is very much in our minds. I do not wish to be precise on specific days of reserve requirements, for obvious reasons.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Parliamentary Under-Secretary aware that when his colleague the Minister of State wrote to me about the FH70 he gave me a categorical assurance that it had no nuclear role? However, before the House on the Hill a statement was made by Administration officials. They said:

"NATO has expressed an interest in modernising nuclear artillery. Specifically, the British, Germans and Italians are concerned that their modern FH70 Cannon under development will be nuclear-capable."

Will the Minister put the House right on that point? Do we envisage the weapon having a nuclear role? Has it a nuclear capability, because that point is important to many Opposition Members? Secondly, in view of the fact——

Hon. Members: Too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interruptions take up time. Come on.

Mr. McNamara: Secondly, as the United States armed forces are developing a forward artillery ammunition supply vehicle which is capable of supplying nuclear weaponry to that howitzer, will the Minister give an undertaking that we will not practise with such supply weapons in the future?

Mr. Lee: There is plainly some confusion about that weapon, and therefore in all fairness I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and give him the precise position on it.

Cyprus

9. **Mr. Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the future of the sovereign bases in Cyprus.

Mr. Stanley: The sovereign base areas in Cyprus are an important British defence asset. I expect them to remain so.

Mr. Johnston: Is not the concept of sovereign bases now anachronistic? If there was a notional contribution to the stability of the area, was its credibility not completely destroyed by the failure of the United Kingdom to take any action when the invasion of Cyprus by its NATO ally Turkey took place?

Mr. Stanley: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that it is a dangerous moment to suggest that the concept of sovereignty somehow becomes anachronistic. The base is sovereign British territory as laid down in the 1960 treaty. It has the full rights of sovereignty that we associate with the use of that word.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the sovereign base areas are among the few places where Turkish and Greek Cypriots are working and living happily together? Secondly, will he confirm that the sovereign bases are used to supply the UN peacekeeping force not just in Cyprus but in southern Lebanon, that Britain supplies the largest national element in that peacekeeping force based on the sovereign bases, and that the sovereign bases play an important part?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am glad to confirm both the points that he raised. It is the case that one of the social benefits of our use of the sovereign base areas is that we employ approximately 3,400 locally-employed civilians and, as my hon. Friend says, they come from both communities. I also confirm what my hon. Friend said about the importance of the logistical back-up that we provide from the sovereign base areas both to the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus and to the United Nations force in the Lebanon.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

11. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group in March.

Mr. Heseltine: The nuclear planning group will meet on 26 and 27 March in Luxembourg. This is one in a series of bi-annual meetings of NATO Defence Ministers, the purpose of which is to discuss nuclear matters within the Alliance.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity at that meeting in March—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] The right hon. Gentleman reads the answers, I am reading the questions. Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity in March to take positive steps to withdraw battlefield nuclear weapons and to ensure that no plans are put forward for the introduction of artillery shells that are capable of transformation into advanced radiation weapons, which are more commonly known outside the Chamber as the ideal capitalist bomb, the neutron bomb?

Mr. Heseltine: As the hon. Member will remember, the neutron bomb was an idea supported by the last Labour Government. We have no plans for the introduction of such a weapon. When I am asked about nuclear weapons of every range, I reply that I shall go on with the policies pursued by the last Labour Government because I believe that they work. They maintain the peace, and I can see no argument for abandoning those policies.

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend accept that the people of this country expect any responsible Government to ensure adequate defence for themselves and their allies, and they congratulate him on his continued efforts in this regard and expect him to continue to do just that?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right, and that is the principal reason why we can assure the Labour party that it will remain in opposition for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give some sign, particularly to the people of my constituency, of when he will raise the upgrading of Pitreavie with his NATO partners, because we are extremely anxious about this particular deliberation? There is a story in *The Scotsman* today, which perhaps the Secretary of State will catch up on, which says that we shall duplicate Northwood at Pitreavie. What will the cost of that operation be? How much NATO finance will be involved? If the right hon. Gentleman does not have an answer, perhaps he will write to me.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Member. I have not seen *The Scotsman* today—an omission that rarely happens during the course of the day. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman on those points.

Mr. Denzil Davies: What general matters will be discussed in the nuclear planning group in March? Hon. Members on both sides of the House are becoming fed up with getting different accounts from the Government and from the United States Congress. This is a real problem, and I hope that the Secretary of State appreciates it. How shall we get proposals in March on the modernisation of these weapons? Will the Government say clearly to the Americans that they have no intention of allowing nuclear shells to be used for the FH70 howitzer?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman, who clearly follows these matters, will remember that NATO has taken a decision to see how far it can reduce its short-range nuclear weapons. The principal item that we shall have to deal with in the forthcoming meeting, the agenda of which has not been finalised, is the scale to which we can carry out the Montebello decision to reduce the number of short-range nuclear weapons. In that process, we shall have to discuss which of the remaining capabilities have to be modernised. That is obviously a dual decision. How far we shall make progress, I cannot anticipate.

South Korea

12. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops are currently stationed in South Korea.

Mr. Stanley: The United Kingdom currently contributes a detachment of 34 to the United Nations honour guard in Seoul. A further six personnel are serving with the Commonwealth liaison mission, including the commander, who is also the British defence attaché.

Mr. Canavan: Why, almost a third of a century after a destructive and divisive war, have we even a token British military presence in effect supporting a Right-wing regime which has a deplorable human rights record? Why are the British Government actively supporting the presence of 40,000 American troops, and American nuclear weapons, just a few hundred miles from the Russian and Chinese borders? Is that not a provocative presence that could be a grave impediment to the peaceful reunification of Korea?

Mr. Stanley: As for the British armed services detachment, the hon. Member is wrong in his concept of that detachment. It is there to discharge a commitment to the United Nations. I should have thought the hon. Member would support that commitment. Its duties are principally ceremonial, but it also has some security duties relating to the British embassy in Seoul.

RAF Molesworth

14. **Dr Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men are currently based at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Heseltine: The Army personnel have largely withdrawn, their task successfully completed, and the site is now guarded by Ministry of Defence police. There remains a small and variable number of service men, both RAF and Army, with responsibilities for command, control, communications and other support to the Ministry of Defence police.

Dr. Mawhinney: Is my right hon. Friend aware that he may have to increase the number of personnel? The Mayor of Peterborough, in conjunction with Labour and Liberal councillors, is conniving to make available city council property to CND so that it can advise protesters at Molesworth about how to evade and break the law. Will my right hon. Friend accept that while this is typical of the bodies mentioned, it is rejected by the majority of my constituents, who are both law-abiding and supportive of the Government's policies?

Mr. Heseltine: I thank my hon. Friend for giving me such conspicuous notice of the question that he intended to ask. It is quite obvious that the gain of my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) is the loss of my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney). I have no doubt at all that the overwhelming majority of the British people will share my hon. Friend's fury that those who seek to frustrate the will of the majority of the people and Government of this country impose an unwarrantable burden upon the ratepayers of individual constituencies, whose support for those people is no more than that of this House.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Has the Secretary of State considered the ill-timing of the Molesworth operation, which could have a detrimental effect upon the talks between the United States of America and the USSR, which at long last are under way?

Mr. Heseltine: I hope that the hon. Gentleman shares the assumption that the return of the Soviet Union to the negotiating table, from which it walked away, came about because the Western powers remained resolute about the maintenance of their own defence and deterrence. It is precisely because we have remained resolute that the Soviet Union, against the advice of the Opposition and of all the peace groups who tried to frustrate the majority Governments of the West, has now been forced back to the conference table.

Mr. Leigh: Has my right hon. Friend seen the latest pamphlet from CND, which asks its supporters "if they wish or do not wish to take part in civil disobedience"? Now that the CND is condemned out of its own mouth for inciting people to break the law, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential that his troops and the police should continue to keep the real peace at Molesworth?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has paid a great deal of attention to these matters. He is absolutely right. He can be assured that we shall pursue whatever policies are necessary for the maintenance of peace. The publications of CND are not required reading in the Ministry of Defence, unlike *The Scotsman*. However, we must accept that in a free society there are those who will give all manner of curious advice to constituents. What is so surprising is that the Opposition, who are supposed to believe in law and order, apparently support these actions.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Secretary of State explain to the House that the reason why he is no longer reading CND publications is perhaps because he is now listening in to or reading transcripts of telephone conversations which his Department authorised so that it could obtain political information about non-subversives, which would serve the political interests of the Conservative party and which the security forces could use for that purpose?

Mr. Heseltine: That is an argument that might appeal to the Opposition, but the real reason why I no longer bother to read CND publications is that I found something from the 1930s which contained all the same arguments and which proved to be wholly ill-founded.

Nuclear Weapons

16. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: Battlefield nuclear weapons operated by United Kingdom forces consist of the Lance missiles and nuclear capable artillery in service with the British Army in Germany. The nuclear warheads for those weapons are provided by the United States.

Mr. Woodall: Will the Minister accept that that will be a disappointing reply to many people in Britain who are completely opposed to any kind of nuclear weapons? Will he press his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to obtain an option of no first use of those weapons when he goes to NATO?

Mr. Stanley: I am surprised at what the hon. Gentleman says, because the particular weapon systems to which I referred were all in service at the time of the Labour Government.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will any statement that is made include reference to the Government's position in opposing the activities of CND by phone-tapping in so far as the Department treats it as an enemy of the state? Does the right hon. Gentleman not think that Parliament has a right to know and that we should have a full statement? Will he ensure that the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box to make that statement?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate that question to question 16.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the Minister now reply to the serious point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), when he asked him to ensure that in future there will be no discrepancy between statements made in the House, such as the answer given to me on 7 June 1984, and statements made previously in Congress?

Mr. Stanley: I do not think that I can add to the answers given on that question previously.

Defence Land (Disposal)

17. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the disposal of defence lands.

Mr. Lee: It is the policy of the Ministry of Defence to dispose of land and buildings that are no longer required for defence purposes.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister accept that the Ministry of Defence acquired large areas of land in Britain during the first and second world wars and has been reluctant to give up that land ever since, despite the fact that the Nugent committee report in the 1970s recommended that a great deal of land should be released? In particular, much of the northern Pennines, which are no longer used for military purposes, are still not available for public use.

Mr. Lee: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's first point. Since 1973, when the Nugent committee reported, we have disposed of about 50,000 acres of land—7·6 per cent. of the total. That has produced receipts of nearly £400 million. A further 6,000 acres are with the PSA for disposal. We allow as much public access for recreational purposes as other priorities allow and co-operate closely with the national park authorities.

Mr. MacKenzie: How many acres of land are held by the Ministry in Gibraltar? Is that land required for defence purposes? If not, will he ensure that it is handed over to the civilian population of Gibraltar as soon as possible in order that that part of the country may be economically viable?

Mr. Lee: The right hon. Gentleman and I were at the Gibraltar heritage conference earlier this morning. The Ministry of Defence has played its full part in releasing whatever land and buildings it can to help Gibraltar develop, particularly its tourism, and, obviously, we are reviewing other areas. We are anxious to help, but I must make it clear that Gibraltar has a substantial continuing strategic and military role.

Trident

18. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received since his most recent announcement of the revised cost of the Trident system.

Mr. Heseltine: Since I announced the revised Trident estimate on 29 January 1985, at column 135, I have received some 60 letters.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that until such time as there is a substantial agreement on verifiable multilateral disarmament, the United Kingdom must retain an independent and indestructible nuclear deterrent? Will he confirm to the House that that is his intention?

Mr. Heseltine: I can confirm that it is our intention to maintain the irreducible minimum nuclear deterrent in partnership with our conventional forces. It is self-evident that those policies have worked in maintaining the peace, and we intend to continue them.

Mr. Strang: Has the Secretary of State noticed the growing opposition to Trident within the British establishment — within senior military circles and the Tory party? Will he at least admit to the House this afternoon that on the basis of yesterday's dollar-sterling rate Trident will cost more than £10,000 million and that more than half of that will be spent on American jobs and technology?

Mr. Heseltine: The House is familiar with the proportion of expenditure across the Atlantic, but the House will also know that the bills for Trident will not begin to mount significantly until later in the decade and it is the exchange rate that prevails at that time, not the current exchange rate, that will determine the final cost. The overall policy will not be changed because of that. It is our belief that we must modernise our independent nuclear deterrent and we intend to do that with the Trident D5 programme. It will be my responsibility, and that of my successors, to fit that into the defence budget.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Has my right hon. Friend received any representations that would make him change his mind about his statements to the House that Trident will not have a deleterious effect upon the conventional procurement budget?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will realise that all budgets are a matter of the allocation of priorities. He will be aware that the Government have increased the defence budget in real terms by £3,000 million a year and that at its peak Trident will be only a fraction of that enhanced capability.

Mr. Norman Atkinson: Does the Secretary of State recall that when the Prime Minister first heard from President Reagan about his nuclear defence in space initiative, her initial response was that it would render Trident useless by 1995? How does the right hon. Gentleman view the position? If space defence against nuclear weapons is possible, what will that do to Trident?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman is slightly confused in his analysis. There is no question of SDI rendering Trident out of date. The issue would be seriously considered only if SDI were to be deployed and if that was coincidental with the ownership of SDI by hostile parties — two extremely questionable assumptions.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Secretary of State clearly hopes that he will not be around when the bills for Trident begin to come in. Is he aware—I am sure that he is—that since the last defence Estimates the cost of Trident has risen by £1,000 million merely because of the fall in the exchange rate? Is he further aware that studies in the United States show that almost every major American defence budget has cost a great deal more than the original estimates because the estimates are deliberately played down to get funding and approval from Congress? Are not Trident's costs totally out of control? Why does the right hon. Gentleman not admit that if he goes ahead with Trident it will mean massive cuts in conventional defence and massive damage to our contribution to NATO?

Mr. Heseltine: Bearing in mind the damage to our contribution to NATO — the policy upon which the Opposition forced the last election — I find it extraordinary that the right hon. Gentleman has the nerve to raise the issue in the House. This Government believe, as the previous Labour Government believed, that an

independent British nuclear deterrent is an essential part of our policy to maintain peace. Unlike the Opposition, we are determined to see our policy through.

RAF Molesworth

19. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much he anticipates spending to maintain security at RAF Molesworth up to the arrival of cruise missiles.

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated annual cost of security at the Molesworth base.

Mr. Heseltine: Missiles will not be delivered to RAF Molesworth until about 1988 and in the meantime the security operation will be such as to ensure that the construction programme is completed on time. It is too soon to say what this operation will eventually have cost.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the cost is likely to be substantial, and that it is a rather distressing cost? Is it not the right time to recognise that he should freeze expenditure on and deployment of nuclear weapons to ensure progress in the nuclear disarmament talks?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman does not appear to have caught up with the news. The Soviet Union has been modernising its intermediate range weapons for a considerable period of time—far longer than the West. It has now come back to the conference table in no large measure because the West is determined to maintain its deterrent, against the advice of the Opposition.

Mr. Pike: Would not the Secretary of State do better to save expense on the security of Molesworth by recognising that the majority of people do not believe that Britain should have cruise? Should we not take into account the fact that the United States would use cruise if it was threatened but this country was not threatened? The matter is completely controlled by the United States and, if put to the test, there is no doubt that it would use cruise.

Mr. Heseltine: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman reject so firmly the policy upon which all Labour Governments since the war have relied. The only consequence of not proceeding as we did at Molesworth would have been to inflict a quite unwarranted burden on the citizens of Molesworth and the surrounding areas, who would have been obstructed—legally and illegally—by supporters of the policies in which the hon. Gentleman believes, at immense cost to the ratepayer and the taxpayer.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend intend to install a weld-mesh fence around Molesworth, as he has agreed should be installed at RAF Greenham Common, and when will the later be installed?

Mr. Heseltine: No one knows better than my hon. Friend the consequences of not proceeding with the dispatch that the Government showed at Molesworth, because my hon. Friend has had to suffer, on behalf of his constituents, the intolerable behaviour that has surrounded Greenham Common. We are now proceeding with the installation of a weld-mesh fence at Molesworth, and I have before me plans to consider such an operation at Greenham Common.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Forth: In accepting our congratulations on the outstanding success of her recent visit to America— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is very limited time for Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Forth: —will my right hon. Friend confirm that she agrees with President Reagan that, for the European currencies to estabish a correct relationship with the dollar, it will be essential for the European countries to move towards American labour laws — *[Interruption.]* — American labour mobility, social security and attitudes to work?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for the first part of that supplementary question. Part of the strength of the dollar is due, of course, to the great strength of the American economy—particularly in the matters to which my hon. Friend refers—to the much lower public expenditure, the much better labour laws and, as the President said during his press conference, the fact that when it came to job creation it was individual workers, business people and entrepreneurs—not the Government —who created virtually every one of the 7 million new jobs in the past two years.

Dr. Owen: As the sterling trade weighted index has fallen to a record low, will the Government now accept the advice of the Governor of the Bank of England and, more importantly, of the CBI, and join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS?

The Prime Minister: In the last day the dollar has reached a record high against sterling, against the French franc and the lira, and it has reached the highest figure for over 13 years against the deutschmark and for 10 years against the Swiss franc. All of that has occurred in the last day. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, joining the EMS would not help in the surge of the dollar against all European currencies. Nor would it mean that we would not have to apply some of the many financial disciplines. It would mean, I am afraid, that we should have less freedom of action to control our own monetary conditions.

Sir William Clark: Has my right hon Friend noticed that over a third of the employees of British Telecom have agreed to take part in the share option scheme in that company? Does she agree that that is proof positive that the ordinary person in this country wishes to belong to a capital-owning democracy?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The British Telecom share issue, which was the largest to be conducted on either side of the Atlantic, has been a great success, particularly for the 2 million people who purchased shares and for the people who work in BT. It is a success of capitalism in that it has spread genuine ownership more widely among our people.

Mr. James Lamond: As the Prime Minister is fond of lecturing us along the lines that the customer is always right and that if we have the right goods at the right price we shall be able to sell them, why does she continually complain that the customers who are buying dollars are mistaken in the value that they put on the pound?

The Prime Minister: I have just indicated that part of the strength of the dollar lies in the strength of the American economy, particularly in things which the hon. Gentleman would not like and would not be able to do. The other part arises from the high deficit and the high interest rates. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman would want our interest rates to be even higher.

Q2. **Mr. Stokes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26th February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stokes: In view of the large number of letters from special interest groups which my right hon. and hon. Friends receive constantly, will my right hon. Friend confirm that we here represent the whole nation and not sections of it?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that my right hon. and hon. Friends receive many letters. Of course, every group has the right to make its own representations. The Government have the duty to assess all the demands and their effect on the taxpayer. That is what we must do and we must represent the will of the majority.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall telling us last June that it was not right for the EC to raise a loan for budgetary purposes? If she still feels that, how does she explain the Government's recent decision to extend additional overdraft facilities to the Common Market, in view of the fact that in the last six months she has already made advance payments of £285 million to the EEC? Can she tell us how much the current overdraft will be and what conditions she has put on it?

The Prime Minister: In view of the Parliament's decision about the budget, the only way for the EC to carry on is to have a budget this year of one twelfth of what the budget was for last year. As that has not been enough to meet outgoings, particularly on some of the agricultural commitments, the monthly amounts have been brought forward and there are facilities to enable the EC to continue. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman would wish it to be totally and utterly disrupted. That would give cause for great concern to our own people.

Mr. Kinnock: After Fontainebleau last year we were told that there was a new machinery that would iron out all the difficulties and that it was largely attributable to the negotiating genius of the Prime Minister. Can the right hon. Lady now answer these questions: how much is the overdraft, what are the conditions on it and does it not mean that we are paying for our own rebate?

The Prime Minister: No. The rebate this year will eventually come, as did the rebate for last year. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that he thought the rebate for last year would not come, but it did come. The new regime cannot come into operation until details are laid before the House. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that it is not due to come into operation until 1 January 1986 and that all the orders must come before this House for approval first.

Q3. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that today's strike action by teachers constitutes a grave dereliction of duty? Does it not further damage the reputation of the teaching profession and its claim to put first and foremost the interests of Britain's schoolchildren?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. For teachers to pursue a pay claim at the expense of children in their care seems to us to be totally and utterly wrong.

Mr. Gould: Does the Prime Minister recall that when I wrote to her a month ago I asked what her response would be if, after interest rates had been raised to crisis level, the downward pressure on the pound continued? Would she care to answer that question now? Are there to be yet higher interest rates, or do we have to live both with the plunging pound and with record interest rates, which have failed to do their job?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my reply to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). The hon. Gentleman tries to ignore half of the situation. Over the last day the dollar has reached a record high against almost all European currencies. Over the past month sterling has appreciated against all major currencies except the yen and the dollar. He knows full well that interest rates are designed to maintain strict monetary conditions. He is well aware also that it would be singularly unhelpful for me to answer any questions about future interest rates or intervention. He knows that that would be unhelpful. He knows that it would be totally wrong for me to do so and, therefore, my answer to him is no.

Q4. **Sir Anthony Kershaw** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: I welcome the announcement that was made yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development of a further gift of 30,000 tonnes of grain to the Sudan. However, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the famine is by no means conquered and that much more aid will be necessary before the harvest in the autumn?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that my hon. Friend has recently returned from the Sudan. I am grateful to him for welcoming the action taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, who was there at about the same time. The action that we have taken for the Sudan means that our aid to that country has reached about £13 million since the onset of the damaging drought conditions. We shall bear in mind the great privations that those in the Sudan are suffering, as well as what we are doing for Ethiopia. Many refugees are coming into the Sudan from Ethiopia. I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome to the Government's action.

Q5. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Prime Minister aware that, notwithstanding the interruptions of her right hon. and hon. Friends a few moments ago in response to a supplementary question about the teachers' strike, parents are deeply worried about the current teachers' dispute, specifically in Scotland? Will she agree to an independent pay review, which seems to be a fair way of settling the problem? Does she accept that parents are worried because they do not want to see the same intransigence on the teachers' dispute as the Prime Minister has shown over the miners' strike and other industrial issues?

The Prime Minister: The teachers' pay claim is a minimum flate rate increase of £1,200 per teacher, which would cost about £600 million. All of that money would have to come from other taxpayers, other parts of education or other parts of the Government system. Teachers' pay has kept pace with inflation since 1979. The employers have offered them arbitration and they have refused. I see no reason for an independent inquiry.

Q6. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity of reading the forecast made yesterday by the London Business School, which says that the economy will grow by 3½ per cent? Will she say what impact that growth will have on employment, industry and exports?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. The latest economic forecasts show optimism about growth in 1985. This follows on 1984 when, in spite of the miners' strike, we had growth of 2½ per cent. In spite of the miners' strike, output rose. Employment rose by about 342,000 in the year to September 1984. Investment reached an all-time record. An optimistic forecast on top of that good record is excellent news.

Q7. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Did the Prime Minister warn President Reagan, on her visit to America, that the overwhelming majority of the British people would regard any direct intervention or any proxy intervention by America in Nicaragua as a danger to world peace? Did she warn him that there would be no support from her Government because the British people realise that the support that is being sent to the Contras is contrary to all the interests of those in the Western world?

The Prime Minister: I made it perfectly clear that we and the Americans firmly support the Contadora process and will continue to do so.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the proposition that it is better to lend to the EEC than to borrow from the IMF?

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend makes his own point in his question.

Q8. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cook: Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister has established herself very firmly in the minds of the populace, and even some sections of the media, as history's greatest misleader of the nation, will she choose to explain to the House today how she can ask Americans to stop supporting insurgents in Northern Ireland and yet, at the same time, give succour and support, directly and indirectly, to the Contras in Nicaragua to undermine a democratically elected Government?

The Prime Minister: In reply to the hon. Gentleman's very carefully rehearsed question, I repeat that I had occasion to thank both President Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill and Members of Congress for the way in which they have done everything to stop funding coming from the United States of America to aid terrorism in Northern Ireland. I also made it perfectly clear, as I have repeated, that we stand firmly for the Contadora process. To add one little thing—which the hon. Gentleman is so anxious that I should do—we regard those democratic elections to which the hon. Gentleman has referred as actually flawed in the run-up to the election, for reasons which my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has given many times.

Prime Minister (Washington Visit)

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the visit which I paid to the United States from 19 to 21 February, accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

In the course of my visit I delivered an address to a joint meeting of the United States Congress. I had a meeting with President Reagan and meetings with eight members of the United States Cabinet and with other senior members of the Administration, as well as with the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. I also met leading members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

My colleagues and I were guests at a luncheon at the White House and the President and Mrs. Reagan came to a dinner at the British Embassy to mark the 200th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the United States.

The principal themes discussed in my talks with the President and other members of the Administration were East-West relations and arms control, economic issues and the middle east.

On East-West relations and arms control, we agreed that the West's objective in the negotiations which will open in Geneva on 12 March should be a sizeable and verifiable reduction in nuclear weapons, which would allow us to maintain security at a lower level of weaponry and at lower cost.

In our discussions on the strategic defence initiative we reaffirmed the four points agreed during my visit to Camp David in December; and, in particular, that research, as permitted under the anti-ballistic missile treaty, should go ahead, but that eventual deployment of a defensive system in space would be a matter for negotiation under the terms of tha treaty. I expressed the hope that British scientists would be associated with research into the strategic defence initiative.

In our discussion of economic issues I explained the concern in Europe at the continued rise of the United States dollar against other currencies. I found this concern widely shared within the United States Administration, not least because of the adverse effect on its own agricultural and manufacturing industries, but it was recognised that no easy remedy existed. The President and I agreed that the best contribution the United States could make to a long-term solution lay in a reduction of its budget deficit. The President has put specific proposals to Congress to this end. I argued strongly against protectionist measures as a way of dealing with the trade effects of the high dollar on the United States economy. I was assured that the Administration were not contemplating such measures.

On the middle east, the President and I both felt that the time was propitious for fresh efforts to arrive at a solution of the Arab-Israel problem. We both expressed our support for King Hussein's endeavours to arrive at a common position among moderate Arab Governments and I welcomed the result of King Fahd's recent visit to Washington. The President confirmed that his proposals of September 1982 remained on the table and that the Administration were ready to pursue them with the parties.

Our talks also dealt with central America; with co-operation against terrorism; and with Northern Ireland—where I thanked the President and members of Congress for their efforts to discourage the donation of funds to organisations which promote and sustain violence. In addition, I raised a number of bilateral issues, in particular the case for more American purchases of British defence equipment and the matter of unitary taxation.

The visit enabled my right hon. Friends and me to convey the British point of view on current issues, as well as the extent of Europe's contribution to the NATO Alliance and Britain's particular contribution to the defence of Western interests worldwide.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I commend the directness of the Prime Minister's statements in Congress and elsewhere in her condemnation of fund raising for terrorists in Northern Ireland, and also commend her refusal to endorse the American Administration's policy of so dangerously acting in central America in order to undermine and overthrow the democratically elected Government in Nicaragua?

Does the right hon. Lady recall saying in the Guildhall last November that there was an urgent need for negotiations between the superpowers

"because of the dangers of war and because we are on the verge of new technologies in space which would cost so much to develop"?

Why has the right hon. Lady done a complete U-turn and shown such pathetic haste to fall in behind the star wars initiative; when it can add absolutely nothing to movements towards peace, negotiations on disarmament or to more effective deterrence against war on this planet?

Does the right hon. Lady agree that the recent bout of speculation against the pound and other currencies was sparked off by the ill-timed comments of President Reagan at last Thursday's press conference? Is it not the case that the Prime Minister built up expectations that she could, with flattery and fawning, persuade the President to bail out the pound, and that her complete failure to do so is a direct reason for the current collapse of sterling? Will she now tell us what she intends to do to arrest the fall in the currency, with all its terrible consequences for interest rates and for import prices for Britain? Or, alternatively, is she just going to sit back helplessly and hopelessly and watch the pound shrivel to below the level of the dollar?

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his initial comment about the importance of not allowing moneys to get through to the IRA in Northern Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the strategic defence initiative. He will, I imagine, have observed that the Soviet Union is already well on the way to research and is, I believe, ahead of us in laser research and electronic pulse beams. It is also already ahead of the West in having an anti-satellite capability and in having experience of the anti-ballistic missile system around Moscow, which has been there for 20 years, and in having experience of updating it. It is absolutely vital for the United States to engage in research in order to catch up with the Soviet Union, to ensure that nuclear deterrence remains balanced, and to make absolutely certain that the Soviet Union does not leap ahead of us in research on anti-ballistic missile weapons when the United States is not doing any.

Therefore, right from the start, I supported President Reagan's initiative on strategic defence. I supported research right from the start — *[Interruption.]* I supported research on the strategic defence initiative right from the start. Right back in 1977 we were well aware that

the Soviet Union was ahead in lasers and electronic pulse beams, and we wondered why the United States did not embark on a programme to catch up. Therefore, we fully support that research programme. It is absolutely vital for balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. As President Reagan made perfectly clear in his statements and as was made perfectly clear at Geneva, if, as a result of that research, weapons were deployed, their deployment would come within the anti-ballistic missile treaty of 1972 and would have to be negotiated properly, as it would be, so that the balance and the deterrence would be maintained.

I understand that Opposition Members are not worried about keeping a balance between the Soviet Union and the West. The Government are anxious about that and anxious to maintain the effectiveness of the deterrent. The work is to enhance, not to diminish, the deterrent.

Regarding sterling, the right hon. Gentleman seemed utterly to ignore the fact that the dollar has surged against all European currencies, including the yen and the Swiss franc, and has reached a record high. However, the right hon. Gentleman conveniently chooses to ignore that. During the past month sterling has appreciated against all the major currencies except the yen and the dollar.

Only two actions can be taken against a surge of currency, and they are limited. One can engage in joint intervention on a small scale compared with the enormous sums involved. It has been done under the Williamsburg agreement, but it can be done only in a way which makes speculators hesitate. It is not a prolonged exercise, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it. The other weapon is interest rates. I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman is urging that they should rise or fall.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, far from being a slap in the face to her, President Reagan's comments after her visit were a confirmation of what she has been saying during the past six years, that is, that the high rate of the dollar encourages our exports and acts as a tariff barrier against American imports, and that American interest rates are not all that high? The President was saying what she had been saying for a long time—that it is time for us to reorganise our economy so that we can compete in a world where no central bank intervention can possible succeed in balancing the currencies.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that there is any action which the G5 countries could have taken to stop the surge of the American dollar on the scale that we have witnessed. I agree that there are three possible explanations. One is the strength, free enterprise and enterprising nature of the American economy, which means that Americans do not cast all their cares on the Government. As President Reagan said, the 7 million jobs created during the past two years were all created by the American people, not by the Government. The second explanation is the size of the deficit and the interest rates necessary to finance it. That is undoubtedly having an effect on the rate of the dollar. The third explanation is the speculators who have been piling in. That is where intervention can sometimes help, if it happens on the right occasion and if it is done in a co-ordinated way.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Is the Prime Minister aware that many members of Congress were surprised at her enthusiasm for the strategic defence initiative, as they are deeply divided on the issue, and many of them feel that priority should be given to seeking a worldwide agreement on banning all nuclear weapons from outer space? I endorse her view that the time may be propitious for a solution to the Arab-Israel conflict, but what specific plans has she to support the initiative taken by King Hussein, King Fahd and President Mubarak? When the Prime Minister left the United States, President Reagan said of the weakness of sterling that each country should stand on its own two feet. Did those words have a familiar ring about them?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the strategic defence initiative, the right hon. Gentleman says that some members of Congress were surprised. I can say only that they showed their appreciation in a very welcome way with prolonged applause throughout the speech and at the end. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman did not observe that or that he chooses to ignore it.

With regard to weapons, only a certain amount of testing is allowed under the anti-ballistic missile treaty. The deployment of weapons would have to be negotiated under the anti-ballistic missile treaty, which is a treaty without a terminal date. The President has made it clear that the deployment of such weapons, if it came to that, would be negotiated under that treaty.

With regard to fresh efforts on the middle east, the President's speech of September 1982 still stands. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman recalls that speech, which was very welcome at the time. Of course, one is doing everything possible to support King Hussein in the welcome efforts that he is making to contribute to a settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem.

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): When discussing the middle east with the President, was my right hon. Friend able to persuade him of the urgent need to launch a major initiative now which responds positively to the appeals of King Hussein and which is prepared to deal firmly, if necessary, with Israeli intransigence?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear that President Reagan said that his speech of 1982 and the plan that it laid out is still on the table, but fresh efforts will be made to try to further the approach that he indicated then. It is important that we should know exactly how far the Palestinian Council and the Palestinian people accept some of the proposals put forward by King Hussein. The position on that is not yet fully clear.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Bearing in mind the fluctuations in the dollar-sterling rate, not just in the past few days but during the past four years, does the right hon. Lady agree that the decline from $2·40 to almost parity in that period shows that the abolition of exchange controls was a dreadful mistake?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the past four years. Since 1979, the dollar has appreciated against sterling by 95 per cent., against the deutschmark by 80 per cent. and against the French franc by 140 per cent. May I point out that the French franc is exchange-controlled.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): In her wide-ranging and far-sighted address to both Houses of Congress, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred appropriately to the union of mind and purpose between the British and American peoples. Since from our long historical

[Mr. Ian Lloyd]

experience the most important symbol of such unity is the unity of currencies, and since we may be approaching an opportunity that may not recur — parity between the pound and the dollar — will my right hon. Friend consider the consequences, which might be most interesting, of declaring the dollar to be legal currency in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I see no prospect of unity of currencies. The answer to the latter half of his question is that the possibility does not exist.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that when in that speech she expressed friendship with the United States she spoke for most people in Britain and that when, in the same speech, she expressed bitter, vindictive hostility against the Soviet Union, she spoke only for herself and the stupid, simple-minded Right-wing members of the Conservative party?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have read the speech fully. I quoted from Mr. Brezhnev in that speech. I gather that the right hon. Gentleman thought those words were mine, but they were not.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present problem of currencies is not so much a matter for Europe or Britain? Does not the problem rest in the hands of Americans, because they are the ones who find that their farmers are going bankrupt and that their industry is unable to export? If we keep our nerve, the balance of currencies will return, because America must live in the real world in the end, as we found after the pound went too high in the 1980s.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the question to which so many right hon. and hon. Members have referred was one from the American press asking the President whether he intended to intervene because of the bad effect that the high dollar was having on agriculture and manufacturing industries. The President indicated—as I understand, because he did not say so—that he did not think that intervention except under the Williamsburg agreement would be likely to occur. I believe that the Williamsburg agreement, which involves joint intervention, is still operative and could therefore have some effect against speculators.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Does the Prime Minister think that it was wise to criticise a friendly Commonwealth Government just to receive the plaudits of the United States, particularly since that Commonwealth Prime Minister is visiting the United Kingdom this week? Will she ever understand that, however much she licks the boots of President Reagan he and his Government will go their own way and not take a blind bit of notice of what she says to them?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman refers to the decision by New Zealand not to accept ships at her ports if New Zealand thinks that they have nuclear weapons on board. I have made it clear, and shall continue to make it clear wherever I am in the world, that British Navy ships are seconded to NATO. We believe in NATO, even if the Opposition would like to destroy it. So long as we believe in NATO and our ships are seconded to NATO, we cannot reveal what weapons they carry. I therefore repeat for the hon. Gentleman's benefit that I have no intention of sa which ships — or whether our ships — carry nuc weapons. That is my duty to keep faith with the NA agreement.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the success of her visit will be widely as having much strengthened the Anglo-Amer alliance and that that is welcome by many of my right and hon. Friends? My right hon. Friend has expre support for the SDI research programme. Why was sh cautious and why did she not go on to support the ever deployment of these weapons, because they, with the ballistic missile treaty, would make the world a much place?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Fri The purpose is to cement the fundamental alliance betw Great Britain and the United States and between English speaking peoples of the world. It is too earl conclude what might come out of the SDI programm will take many years to develop and we shall during time have to rely solely on the nuclear deterrent. Whe know what will come out of it, the United States will to negotiate under the anti-ballistic missile treaty several years time we shall be in a better position to j the effect of research.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Did the Prime Min have an opportunity during her discussions with Presi Reagan to express appreciation of the contribution w American investment makes to job creation in Nort Ireland? Was she given any reason to believe that would be further American investment to help to pro jobs for young people and so wean them away from military organisations and to help to speed pro towards normality?

The Prime Minister: One has to take advantage o high dollar in two respects. First, it encourages expo the United States from all parts of the United Kingd and a number of companies are taking advantage of Secondly, it is a very good time for inward investment this country from the United States. That wil encouraged.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right Friend agree that the massive deficit in the United St its huge defence spending, the boom in imports an boom in foreign deposits are more important factors some other factors to do with United States' econ tradition and internal behaviour such as labour mob In that context, and bearing in mind what the Pres unfortunately said at the press conference, sure behoves us to look after our interests in Europe mor example, by joining the EMS as a full membe defending ourselves and by putting more pressure o Americans to adopt a more internationalist mor policy?

The Prime Minister: I believe, and the Amer believe, that the fundamental strength of the Ame economy is the underlying enterprise culture o American people. They go for self-reliance and su People, not the Government, create jobs, as the Pre said in his statement at that press conference to whi hon. Friend referred. The Americans have a muc rigid labour market. Many more small business

starting up in the United States than in Britain. That underlying difference is the fundamental strength of the American economy.

My hon. Friend is aware that the dollar has surged against all European currencies. It is at a record high. Therefore, to join the EMS would make no difference. It would inhibit some of our present freedom of action.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Will the right hon. Lady confirm that the Northern Ireland problem was one of the subjects discussed with President Reagan? Apart from the subject of cutting off the flow of funds to the IRA, were any other aspects of the Northern Ireland problem discussed? Did President Reagan make any other positive offers of assistance to resolve that problem?

The Prime Minister: No, nor would I expect him to do so. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the United States purchases a number of export products from Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman will have seen my comments that a dialogue continues between this Government and Mr. Garret FitzGerald's Government in the Republic of Ireland with a view to achieving peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the increasing interest shown by the United States Administration and by representatives on Capitol hill in the subject of Afghanistan, especially humanitarian aid in that country? Did my right hon. Friend have an opportunity to discuss that matter with the President of the United States?

The Prime Minister: We did not discuss in detail the position of Afghanistan. We pursued the subject of trying to persuade the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan to leave that country to determine its own future.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does the Prime Minister really not understand that, once the massive technological and industrial base for the research and development of star wars has been established over the next 20 or 30 years, it will be impossible to abandon the project—because of the effect on jobs in the American economy or to abandon the negotiations on the project?

The Prime Minister: It is vital to ascertain through research exactly what can be achieved. As I have said, the Soviet Union was already well ahead with certain types of research. For the Soviet Union to have gone ahead and to have had a system that would stop nuclear missiles, and, in that way, stop the nuclear deterrent, and for the United States to have done nothing would have upset the balance upon which our security ultimately depends.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): During my right hon. Friend's visit to Washington, did she have the chance to observe the contribution made by small businesses in the United States towards the creation of jobs? Will my right hon. Friend lend the full weight of her authority to the efforts in this country to remove bureaucratic and other obstacles to the development of new businesses?

The Prime Minister: We had considerable discussions on this subject with the President and the Commerce and Treasury Secretaries. An outstanding feature of the American economy is the fact that the jobs created have come from small business and the numbers employed by big manufacturing business are decreasing. It is, therefore, vital to secure in this country that same enterprise culture that enables these new small businesses to come into existence. We must examine the possibility of reducing the number of regulations so that it is easier to start up businesses here than it is.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Did President Reagan, Secretary Shultz or any other senior American approve of the fact that the right hon. Lady did not negotiate on the Falklands?

The Prime Minister: No one said anything to the contrary to me. I made my position very clear, and it is very different from that of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I thoroughly agree with my right hon. Friend on SDI. Indeed, early-day motion 404, which was signed by myself and several of my and right hon. and hon. Friends, is totally in line with her view. Did my right hon. Friend obtain an understanding from President Reagan on NASA that there would be a sharing of research work? Will that mean more job opportunities? If so, will my right hon. Friend spell this out loudly and clearly so that the Opposition doubters will see in this move the defence not only of this country but of the whole of Europe and understand the need in the distant future to destroy nuclear stores? This will mean the eventual protection of everyone and technology transfers with the USSR.

The Prime Minister: With regard to the SDI, Secretary Weinberger is anxious that other European countries should join the research effort. It is my belief that we shall not be the only country that offers to do so. It is important that we do so that we can keep up with the latest technological developments in a sphere in which we would otherwise have no opportunity to engage.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): As the Prime Minister did not just return from Washington empty handed with regard to economic policy, but, worse than that, we now have a record low against the trade-weighted index of all currencies, will she take further steps now to stop the disruption and distortion to world trade caused by the economic policy being followed in Washington? Will she reconsider her reply that the only answer to the problem is united action in Europe with our partners in the European Community, and consider entry into the European monetary system?

The Prime Minister: I have said over and over again that all the currencies in the European monetary system are also at record lows against the dollar. The EMS does not protect one from a surge by the dollar. Most countries have gone down on the trade-weighted index because of the strength of the dollar. The same factor is affecting us all.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take into account the fact that we have a heavy day ahead of us. *[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members should listen to what I have to say. I propose to allow questions to continue for a further 15 minutes, during which time I hope that every hon. Member who is now standing will be called.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Perhaps the Prime Minister will answer the question that I asked her before she went to Washington. When she talks about the dollar being dominant in world currency markets and tries to

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explain that all currencies are suffering, why is the trade-weighted index at an all-time low today? Is she aware that any British citizen who wants to buy Italian currency will have to pay a premium on the forward exchange markets to get hold of it? It is the first time that that has happened in the 30 years that the Prime Minister has been in the House. If that is the case, what success has she brought back from Washington, especially when we take into account that she has spent in total £2 million of taxpayers' money on gallivanting around the world.

The Prime Minister: With regard to the real part of the hon. Gentleman's question on the trade-weighted index, the dollar is of course 25 per cent. of that index and therefore most currencies are much lower than they were. He tries to say that other countries have not suffered. Since 1979, the dollar has appreciated against sterling by 95 per cent., against the deutschmark by 80 per cent., against the French franc by 146 per cent., the lira by 153 per cent. and the Swiss franc by 68 per cent.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I welcome the strategic defence initiative announced by my right hon. Friend and our participation in it, but did she take the opportunity to raise with the President during her discussions the serious problem posed to co-operation in high-tech industries between our countries by American claims to legislate for other countries extraterritorially in contravention of their sovereignty and in breach of international law?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That matter has been pursued many times. It was pursued on this occasion with regard to the anti-trust legislation and unitary taxation. Both matters were raised.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): When the Prime Minister refers to the President's speech in 1982 as still standing and being welcome, is she aware that it was welcomed by one side only? If there is to be peace in that area, there must be consent on both sides. While Israel is only one nation among many, it is the only democratic nation in that area, and it is one side of the argument. Its interests, which the Prime Minister did not mention, are entitled to be recognised.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware, that speech fully recognised, as have other statements since and all statements from this Government, the right to security of all states in the area. That has never been in doubt. That speech also set out a course of action for the future under which the West Bank may become a part of a federated Jordan. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will welcome a settlement of the problems in that area which fully recognises not just Israel's right to exist, but to exist behind secure borders.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people in this country believe that her statement to both Houses of Congress was an important re-statement of the special cultural, historical, economic and security interests linking our two countries? Will she bear in mind that those people in the House and outside who are wholehearted supporters of the Government's economic policy are not indifferent to this country's exchange rate and believe that more can be done on a European basis to correct the problem, more adequate to reflect this country's assets and interests by a mo realistic exchange rate?

The Prime Minister: Only two things can be do about an exchange rate, and both of them to a limit extent. The first is interest rates. My hon. Friend will well aware that we took action here, but the purpose interest rates is not to defend a specific exchange rate, b to hold a strict monetary policy. The other thing intervention under the G5 arrangement. At first it appear to have stopped the surge of the dollar, but there is so mu money moving around the world from non-residents a leads and lags on trade that intervention could n regularly stop the surge of the dollar. It can come in fro time to time to make it uncertain for the speculator.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the right ho Lady aware how humiliating it is for this country for h to go to Washington and to act as a kind of echo President Reagan? She should perhaps be reminded th this country is not a satellite. Is she aware that there is great deal of admiration for the way in which New Zeala is standing up to the pressures of the United States? O would have expected her to try to understand that point view instead of once again simply carrying out Preside Reagan's wishes?

The Prime Minister: We go to the United States allies in NATO. I believe that most people in this countr if not the hon. Gentleman or the Opposition, are gratef to the United States for keeping 300,000 troops on t central front in Europe. They help to maintain, amo other things, this country's right to freedom, justice a democracy. With regard to the Nicaraguan point, I repe that we and the United States Government share common——

Mr. Winnick: I said New Zealand.

The Prime Minister: I am sorry, did the ho Gentleman say New Zealand? I have already ful answered about New Zealand. We shall not reveal whi of our ships is carrying nuclear weapons.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): When my rig hon. Friend offered British co-operation and the c operation of scientists with the SDI was she aware ho appropriate that was, coming as it did within a few da of the 50th anniversary of the invention of radar by n kinsman, Sir Robert Watson-Watt, a defence syste which has been crucially important over the past 50 yea and continues to be so?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Frien I think the United States fully appreciates this country excellence in research and also its inventive genius. It pleased that we have offered to help in the SDI resear programme.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): When t Prime Minister did her "Garret FitzGerald and I" pa piece in Congress, was she implying that his supp would run to the pitiless killing, within a few hours, of Irish schoolboy by British soldiers, or is she qu indifferent to the political consequences of an intensifi tion of the shoot-to-kill policy in the north of Ireland to position of Dr. FitzGerald in the south and to constitutio nationalism in the north of Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I believe that Dr. Garret FitzGerald and I take exactly the same view about terrorism and the IRA. Let me make my view clear. I am grateful to our security forces and the police in Northern Ireland for the excellent way in which they do everything to protect the citizens of that country.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Did my right hon. Friend tell the President that employment in the United Kingdom is rising? Does she agree that much more emphasis should be placed on the advantages of the more competitive pound, and that a sharply falling dollar would have disastrous consequences for the world economy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I pointed out that employment in the British economy is rising, as my hon. Friend knows. In the year to last September, the numbers employed rose by about 340,000. However, that rise did not have an impact on the unemployment register because many married women came into jobs. Therefore, the number of jobs is rising but the number of unemployed is not falling.

With regard to my hon. Friend's other point, a number of people who are worried about the surge of the dollar would also be worried if it suddenly turned and sharply fell. Both would have disastrous consequences on certain parts of our economy.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): If the Prime Minister attributes the strength of the dollar to the underlying strength of the American economy, how can she deny that the weakness of the pound is due to the underlying weakness of the British economy after six years of Conservative Government?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman takes that view, he will also take the view that the Japanese, German and Swiss economies are weak. That is not so, and I am not prepared to call weak an economy that, in spite of a coal strike, grew by 2·5 per cent., has record output and investment and an increase of employment.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a widespread welcome for the emphasis given to the middle east question? She has twice referred to the President's speech in 1982, which was then an initiative. Does she agree that what we want now is not an old initiative but a new one, and would she consider stressing that point in further talks with the President?

The Prime Minister: Probably one of the most important things to try to establish is whether the Palestinian people will accept security council resolution 242 as modified by resolution 338. If it is acceptable to the Palestinian people as a whole, that opens the way to further negotiations through the most excellent offices of King Hussein.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Will the Prime Minister answer a question that is puzzling the House? Did President Reagan feed her any Pal meat when she was in America?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry, I did not hear. Will the hon. Gentleman kindly repeat his question?

Mr. Redmond: Did President Reagan feed the right hon. Lady any Pal meat?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that I asked the hon. Gentleman to repeat his question. It was not worth answering, nor taking up the time of the House.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I recognise the great mutual benefits that would ensue from joint research on the SDI between the United States and the United Kingdom. However, did my right hon. Friend endorse the foreign policy and security implications behind the SDI, that is, that an effective space-based defence, rather than diminishing deterrence, would improve and enhance it?

The Prime Minister: The United States makes it clear that embarking upon this programme will enhance deterrence, as my hon. Friend has said, and not reduce it.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dumfermline, West): Will the Prime Minister concede that it is trifle embarrassing to watch the so-called Iron Lady casting herself, like a simpering teenager with a crush, on a B-grade actor who short changes her $1·033 to the pound. Will she stop praising the United States economy and telling us what benefits it has, and do something to enhance our economy by building up the manufacturing base and stopping our capital and monetary assets flowing to the United States?

The Prime Minister: The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question showed more of his mind than of mine. That is absurd and ridiculous. I have great admiration for the United States economy, which has had the ability, over the past 20 years, to create the number of jobs that have been created there, as the President said, not by the action of Government but by the action of the people, against a financial and regulated framework that has reduced the number of regulations and the amount of taxation. There are drawbacks. One of the reasons for the high dollar is the deficit and the high interest rates required, even with all the advantages of the United States economy, to draw in money from the rest of the world. The President has sent proposals to Congress to try to deal with the deficit, and set the aim of a balanced budget during his last state of the union speech.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Did my right hon. Friend have time to discuss Trident and the possibility of increased offset opportunities to benefit the United Kingdom aerospace industry?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence had particular discussions, and I mentioned to the President the need to purchase more British equipment. I mentioned a number of orders that we have in mind that would be of great benefit to some of our companies.

Mr. Kinnock At Christmas time, the right hon. Lady let it be known that President Reagan had told her that he would intervene to stop the rise of the dollar. What has happened since? Why, in the intervening period, has the President chosen to let her down so badly? As to the answers that she gave on star wars, she asserted in the past half hour that the Soviet Union is producing an effective defence against the Western deterrent. If that is the case, why is she spending vast sums of money on Trident to make additions to that deterrent arsenal? In view of the fall in the pound, how much extra will the Trident missile cost?

The Prime Minister: With regard to intervention, that was agreed under the Williamsburg economic summit under certain specific conditions.

Mr. Kinnock: Camp David.

The Prime Minister: The Camp David summit dealt almost exclusively with the SDI and one or two other things, but not so much with the economic aspect. I think that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the G5 meeting which took place later in Washington, and from which there was a communiqué——

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): What about the new agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am answering the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), not the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey).

I think that the right hon. Member for Islwyn is referring to the G5 arrangement agreed among the G5 countries later in Washington, which was set out in a communiqué. If the right hon. Gentleman does not think that it was, he can find the communiqué.

Mr. Healey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister, somewhat to my surprise, referred to what I said. I was simply reminding my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) that the Prime Minister, after her return from Washington in December, said that there was a great new agreement, but it simply repeated the earlier agreement, on joint intervention to prevent the rise of the dollar. My right hon. Friend was asking the Prime Minister why the President of the United States has now ditched her.

The Prime Minister: I repeat what the facts are, Mr. President—*[Laughter.]*—Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have all done it.

Mr. Healey: The right hon. Lady did it.

The Prime Minister: The facts are that first it was agreed under the Williamsburg summit in June 1983 that in certain circumstances there could be co-ordinated intervention. That was repeated at the G5 meeting in Washington, which took place well after Christmas. There has been a certain amount of intervention, as has already been announced and as the right hon. Gentleman knows. The amount of intervention cannot deal fully with the sums of money that are being moved about the world, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, both by non-residents and also by the leads and lags in trade. At any rate, this Government have not had to go to the International Monetary Fund, as happened under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of or Mr. Speaker. When answering a question from one of hon. Friends I believe that the Prime Min inadvertently misled the House. I am sure that she w not want a misleading answer to remain on the record answer to a question about her discussions with Presi Reagan regarding unemployment, in this country an increase in employment the Prime Minister said that told President Reagan that although employment in country increased last year by 300,000 it had not made impact upon unemployment because—I believe that is the misleading part of her answer—large number married women came on to the register. That is clearly the case. The Prime Minister is creating the impres that the increase in unemployment last year was almost entirely to married women coming on to register. I am sure that the Prime Minister would not such a misleading answer to remain on the record.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that that point of order co into the category of trying to extend Question Time. S the Prime Minister has been charged with giving incorrect answer, however, perhaps she would lik answer it.

Mrs. Thatcher: Those jobs, Mr. Speaker, were filled from the unemployment register. If they had filled from the unemployed register the number unemployed would have fallen. I believe tha considerable number of married women going bac work was a factor.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South East): Given the question asked by the hon. Member for Southamp Test (Mr. Hill) went on for two minutes but seemed t on for much longer, given also that during the t quarters of an hour of questions on the Prime Minis statement a large amount of the time was taken up questions from right hon. and hon. Members on the F Benches, in order to protect the rights of Back Benc I wonder whether, Mr. Speaker, you would cons extending questions on the Statement for a further minutes, since there are only about half a dozen more Members who wish to ask questions?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot do that, in fairness to a Stan Order No. 10 application, a ten-minute Bill and those wish to take part in the subsequent debate. I try to after the interests of Back Benchers and to include as m as possible. Because of the importance of the statem I have allowed questions on it to continue for rather lo than I would normally allow.

Law Centres, Vauxhall

4.23 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the imminent closure of law centres in the Vauxhall constituency."

The matter is specific because it affects two law centres in my constituency. It is urgent because one of them, the Stockwell and Clapham law centre, has already received notice of no further funding from the end of March of this year. It is important because of the manner in which Ministers have changed their policy on law centre funding and have acted without due notice or warning. For instance, the Lord Chancellor in a letter to Lord Elwyn-Jones dated 19 November 1984 said that the Government acknowledged the part to be played by law centres in the provision of legal services where this suited local circumstances. He fully appreciated that law centres are now seen as playing an important part in the provision of advisory services.

The Lord Chancellor's Department, in a letter to Simon Hillyard of the Law Society dated 20 November 1984, said that after the abolition of the Greater London council, Government policy is to provide traditional support for London boroughs to help individual local authorities to take on support for purely local organisations or projects. It is envisaged that this scheme covering law centres will be separate from, and additional to, the normal urban programme arrangements, but that the criteria for support should be broadly similar.

In its 34th annual report published in January 1985, the Legal Aid Advisory Committee made two significant recommendations in paragraph 441. The first was that law centres should be treated as an essential part of the national network of legal services. As the committee put it, the Government

"should take on responsibility for their core funding and the basis of that funding should be sufficiently assured to allow law centres to pursue viable recruitment and staffing policies and to promote long term planning."

Its second recommendation was that the first priority should be to ensure the survival of existing law centres without waiting upon the aftermath of changes in local government and urban programme policy to see what support borough and district councils choose to provide.

In a letter dated 10 January 1984 to the Confederation of Law Centres, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), said:

"I also appreciate the points you make about the particular uncertainties which have faced law centres given relatively short term support under the urban programme while longer term policy is discussed between Departments. However, these discussions are in fact continuing and until they are complete I do not foresee our being able to grant approvals of more than two years duration."

I stress, Mr. Speaker, the emphasis upon two years' duration. It is not a matter of two weeks or six weeks. Yet in a letter to Mr. Barry O'Keefe, chairman of the management committee of the north Lambeth law centre dated 20 February, 1985, the Under-Secretary stated that he was afraid that advice-giving projects such as the north Lambeth law centre were not a partnership priority and that he had therefore decided not to review the law centre's funding any further. The——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make the speech that he would make if his application were to be granted.

Mr. Holland: I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that there should be a debate on the Adjournment of the House on law centre closures since this is a matter of concern not only to my own constituents but to others. Such law centres carry an enormous work load. They deal with thousands of cases every year. None of the cases which such law centres carry concerning education, immigration, social security or employment are eligible for legal aid. Therefore, this is an urgent matter. Within six weeks, there will be people whose cases are now being handled by such law centres who will have nobody to represent them in courts or in tribunals.

In his report on the disorders in Lambeth, Lord Scarman urged that resources to the boroughs should be increased in order to prevent an explosion of protests on the streets. Ministers at first respected this recommendation, but those who are now responsible for the inner city partnership claim that the law centres, at six weeks' notice, should go to their local authorities for funding.

I feel that I hardly need to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that yesterday the House debated the rate capping of specific councils such as Lambeth. This poses an intolerable "Catch-22" dilemma for local councils. If Lambeth were to support the law centres it would risk breaking the law by exceeding the rate capping limits. If the law centres are closed, no Minister and no hon. Member should be surprised if people take the law into their own hands. This is an urgent matter, Mr. Speaker, and the House should, in my view, debate it now.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the imminent closure of law centres in the Vauxhall constituency."

I have listened with care to the hon. Member, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Constitutional Reform (Scotland)

4.28 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for formal public consultation in Scotland on the subject of constitutional reform by a committee of members of the House of Commons; to provide for a report to Parliament on the outcome of such consultation; and for connected purposes.

This task could most appropriately be carried out by a sub-committee of the Scottish Grand Committee, which would accurately reflect the opinions of the Scottish electorate.

I raise this matter today, Mr. Speaker, because this week will bring the sixth anniversary of the referendum in which Scottish voters gave a majority of 77,435 for the establishment of the Scottish Assembly. That referendum was followed almost immediately by the 1979 general election, and the incoming Tory Government refused to implement the Scotland Act, in spite of the referendum result. The Act was repealed in 1979, despite the fact that at that stage 49 of Scotland's 71 Members of Parliament were committed to the establishment of a Scottish legislature. The corresponding figure in this present Parliament is 51 out of 72 Scottish Members of Parliament committed to some degree of Scottish home rule. But what have we got? We have a completely unrepresentative, pseudo-colonial administration in the Scottish Office and a Secretary of State for Scotland in constant conflict with practically any group in Scotland that anyone cares to mention, whether it be doctors, pensioners, teachers, miners, ratepayers or elected local authorities of all political persuasions. One only has to name them and he is in conflict with them.

Under those circumstances the Secretary of State has had to rely increasingly on repressive powers imposed directly from Whitehall. The House has rubber-stamped a series of measures of that nature in recent years. Indeed, Scotland has often been the guinea pig for the Government's extensions of central control. Remote government is bad government. Scotland has been subjected to legislative changes, which have been at best irrelevant and at worse damaging. The Secretary of State is neither willing nor able to take appropriate action to deal with the problems that are supposed to come within his responsibility.

Let me take just one example. I doubt very much whether a Scottish Assembly would have allowed the present teachers' dispute to develop into the harmful confrontation that is now hitting Scottish schools.

The situation is dangerous. The Government's failure to respect democratic principles in Scotland is bringing the constitution into disrepute. That state of affairs can only play into the hands of nationalists who want to break up the United Kingdom. Or rather, it might play into their hands if they were not so obsessed with their party's internal structure.

There are 21 Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament, including the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) who thinks that he is the Secretary of State for Scotland. They claim to be looking after Scottish interests in the Government but there is some doubt about their ability to do that. I call to mind a certain prominent Conservative in Scottish local government who said that Scottish Tory Members of Parliament have a special relationship with the Prime Minister. He claims t were to tell them to go and jump in the lake, most would not even hesitate to take off their trousers

But some Tories have acknowledged the constitutional reform. I shall refrain from saying that might embarrass the hon. Member for Ed Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) the Minister of State, For Commonwealth Office; or the right hon. Mer Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smi Minister of State, Department of Energy, and far b me to draw attention to the promise made by Lo of the Hirsel that a Conservative Governmen introduce a better devolution scheme to super Scotland Act 1978.

But I must say something about the Tory man 1983 because, contrary to popular belief, that m Scotland once in the context of a reference to the sheepmeat regime. Some of us feel that that extremely appropriate forecast of the effectivene present Administration in the Scottish Office.

But there was also a specifically Scottish Tory manifesto which included a paragraph that migh the House. It said:

"We remain willing to consider further changes to the government of Scotland within the United Kingdo

There it is in black and white. That manifesto com should allow Tory Members, as well as the rest support my Bill this afternoon.

Scottish Members can, must and will us opportunity at our disposal to press the case constitutional reform that Scotland wants and Members for my constituency of East Lothian h on that track for a long time, starting with the Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun in the 18th centu immediate predecessor, John Mackintosh, contr lot to the debate. I make no bones about the fact greatest ambition is to be able to take a seat in the Assembly and I am confident that I shall be able at some time.

But in political terms we recognise that practical way of getting a Scottish Assembly is t Labour Government here at Westminster. The nex Government will be committed to legislate on dev We are determined to make our proposals fully un and to have them agreed in advance. There mu grounds for confusion or obstruction next time ro are seeking the fullest understanding with colleag other parts of Britain and the Labour party is lau process of consultation on our revised de proposals in Scotland.

We have already published a Green Paper se Labour's plan for a Scottish Assembly with economic and revenue-raising powers as well as of powers already devolved to the Scottish Of hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathc Maxton) will seek to introduce a Bill next Tu highlight those proposals. Scottish Labour Mer Parliament will be starting that formal consultatio in Scotland in the near future. I urge the House t this eminently reasonable procedure by giving me introduce the Bill today.

4.35 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *ros*

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. and learned G seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Shame.

Mr. Fairbairn: It may be a shame for a Scottish nationalist to regard it as the right of a Member of Parliament to express his views against a Bill which has no rational or proper constitutional basis. The Bill is essentially a childish measure in which the hon. Member for Berwickshire——

Mr. Home Robertson: Get it right. East Lothian.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson)—who lives in Berwickshire. He owns it. Part of what he owns is in dreaded England. One still has to go through dreaded England to get there.

The Bill seeks to say, "Because we temporarily have a political advantage in one part of the land mass of the United Kingdom, we want to separate that bit off to our temporary advantage and impose our principles in one part of the kingdom which we shall never be likely to impose in the foreseeable future"—and, I hope, not in any other part of the United Kingdom in my lifetime if I live to be 200.

The absurd premise upon which the hon. Gentleman based his case was that remote government is bad government. Therefore, he proposes this afternoon that there should be a form of government that is run from Edinburgh and that controls, among other places, Kirkwall. Kirkwall happens to be rather further from Edinburgh than Edinburgh is from London and certainly further from Edinburgh than London is from Paxton, where the hon. Gentleman lives. Therefore, the concept of geographical distance has nothing whatever to do with the rights or wrongs of government.

If the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) imagines that Scotland should be a sort of Jewish homeland for the Scots, all I can say is that he should understand that the majority of Scots in the United Kingdom of whom he is so fond do not live in Scotland but in England, Wales and Ireland. Of all the Scots who dwell upon the earth the vast majority live in North America. Far more Scots live in Australia and New Zealand than in Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Fairbairn: Therefore, the concept of a separate Scottish Government or Assembly is bogus.

I do not doubt that, as the hon. Member for East Lothian said, the teachers' strike would have been settled. Of course it would. Socialism is all about giving away somebody else's money without thought for the consequences. I have not the slightest doubt that the miners' strike in Scotland would have been settled with an Assembly. The Assembly, of which he would presumably be a member—that would be the only benefit to the House of Commons—would again give them the money. The consequences for the rest of the people of Scotland would not matter one whit.

As the hon. Gentleman was foolish enough to quote Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who happens to be one the greatest and wisest Scottish writers, let me remind him that although he prayed him in aid, Andrew Fletcher would not have been happy to read the purblind mucked-up English in which the hon. Gentleman's Bill is couched. Andrew Fletcher was a patriot—he was as much a British patriot as he was a Scottish patriot. Our country is Great Britain. We have one Queen, one Parliament and one people. Let it never be divided.

If the wishes of Opposition Members were to come to fruition, and if they think that they can cut little bits off the body politic when it suits them, I have no doubt that the south-east of England, the north-west of England and other little places that see a temporary advantage would wish to do the same.

I invite the House to reject the introduction of the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 115, Noes 223.

Division No. 125] **[4.40 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Alton, David	Haynes, Frank
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Home Robertson, John
Barron, Kevin	Howells, Geraint
Beith, A. J.	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Blair, Anthony	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Boyes, Roland	Hume, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Johnston, Russell
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Kennedy, Charles
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Kirkwood, Archy
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Lambie, David
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Lamond, James
Bruce, Malcolm	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Buchan, Norman	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Caborn, Richard	Loyden, Edward
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	McGuire, Michael
Campbell-Savours, Dale	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Canavan, Dennis	Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Cartwright, John	Maclennan, Robert
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	McNamara, Kevin
Clarke, Thomas	McTaggart, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Maxton, John
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	Maynard, Miss Joan
Corbett, Robin	Meadowcroft, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy	Michie, William
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Craigen, J. M.	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	O'Neill, Martin
Deakins, Eric	Park, George
Dewar, Donald	Parry, Robert
Douglas, Dick	Patchett, Terry
Duffy, A. E. P.	Pavitt, Laurie
Eastham, Ken	Penhaligon, David
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*	Radice, Giles
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Randall, Stuart
Ewing, Harry	Redmond, M.
Fatchett, Derek	Richardson, Ms Jo
Faulds, Andrew	Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Fisher, Mark	Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Rogers, Allan
Forrester, John	Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Foster, Derek	Skinner, Dennis
Foulkes, George	Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald	Snape, Peter
Freud, Clement	Steel, Rt Hon David
Godman, Dr Norman	Strang, Gavin
Golding, John	Straw, Jack
Gould, Bryan	Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Gourlay, Harry	Torney, Tom
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Wainwright, R.
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*	Wallace, James
Hancock, Mr. Michael	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Harman, Ms Harriet	Williams, Rt Hon A.

Woodall, Alec

Mr. David Marshall and
Mr. William McKelvey.

Tellers for the Ayes:

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Browne, John
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cowans, Harry
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garratt, W. E.
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
McWilliam, John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn and
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Water (Fluoridation) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New Clause 6

MONITORING OF FLUORIDE LEVELS

'The Secretary of State shall make provision for constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom.'.—*[Mr. Best.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.50 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that it would be for the convenience of the House to discuss at the same time the following: New clause 11—*Monitoring*—

'The Secretary of State shall establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and aquatic life

and to report the result of such monitoring to each House of Parliament every 12 months.'.

New clause 18—*Termination of applications under section 1(1)*—

If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application made under section 1(1).'.

Mr. Best: While I agree that it would be convenient to discuss the three new clauses together, I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have been informed by a number of hon. Members that they would like separate Divisions on each of the new clauses.

New clause 6 requires:

"The Secretary of State shall make provision for constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom."

That would require my right hon. Friend to examine fluoride levels to see whether the health authorities and statutory water undertakers were abiding by the legislation, especially the provision that the level of fluoride added to water, so far as reasonably practicable, was one part per million.

New clause 11 is different, in that it requires my right hon. Friend to

"establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and aquatic life

and to report the result of such monitoring to each House of Parliament every 12 months.'.

That monitoring is designed to look at the effects of the addition of fluoride on health and the other aspects mentioned in the clause.

New clause 18 is different from the other two, in that

'If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application made under section 1(1).'.

The gravamen of that is to give the Secretary of State a power, which he would not otherwise enjoy, to act should it become obvious to him that there was harm to health. He would then be able to step in and prevent fluoride from being added to water. In other words, the clause would place on my right hon. Friend a duty to be, as it were, the guardian of the public health in this matter.

Although it may be convenient for hon. Members to debate the three clauses together, they are separate in their effects and, in those circumstances, I hope that we shall be able to have separate Divisions on them in due course.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member was kind enough to mention the matter to me during the last Division. Having looked into the matter, I believe that it is convenient for the House to debate them together, and I shall be prepared to allow a separate Division on new clause 11.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to you for that indication, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. New clauses 6 and 11 are concerned with monitoring. Other hon. Members may feel —I do not feel this—that the Government have scope to conduct monitoring satisfactorily. New clause 18, however, is totally different, in that it is designed to come into effect if something goes wrong. Under that provision the Secretary of State would have power to take action urgently, and in the circumstances with which that clause is concerned urgent action would be required. Is there any possibility of your reconsidering the matter and allowing a Division on new clause 18?

Mr. Speaker: I have looked at the matter carefully, and the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), in whose name new clause 18 stands, knows that it is somewhat defective in its drafting. I would not be prepared to allow a separate Division on that. I believe that this grouping of new clauses gives wide enough scope for a general debate, and the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) can advance the case to which he referred, even if he does not support it.

Mr. Marlow: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker. I take on board everything that you have said. The Minister may comment on the issue later, and he may be able to satisfy the House that the subject with which new clause 18—even though it may be defective—deals is already provided for in the Bill. However, if the Minister does not have the opportunity to deal with that issue, or cannot satisfy the House about it, might you, in those circumstances, feel able to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Speaker: Let us wait and see what the Minister says on the subject, and then I may reconsider the matter.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Might I raise with you a matter concerning the notes on clauses, which I understand were available to hon. Members who were fortunate enough to serve on the Standing Committee? I have ascertained from the Vote Office as such notes on clauses as were available at that time are not available today. It would be helpful for hon. Members who wish to participate in debating what is an important matter to have access to the notes on clauses. I wonder whether the Minister has made arrangements for the Vote Office to make that information available for us.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter not for me but for the Government. The Minister will have heard what the hon. Member has said, as a result of which something may happen.

Mr. Best: I can assist my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I asked the Department to provide me with a copy of that information, and it was good enough to do so. I regret that the documents which my hon. Friend wants are not available in the Vote Office. I agree with him that hon. Members might find the information useful. I think that that has been the practice in the past. I shall be schooled by others who may have a better recollection as to whether notes on new clauses and amendments have been provided in the Vote Office on other Bills. It is my recollection that they have been, but I am not sure.

5 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Notes on clauses are provided by the Government as a matter of courtesy to Members of the Standing Committee. That is a courtesy on which I have always been keen when in opposition and in government. I am glad that the practice has been appreciated by individual Members. I do not think that it has been extended to an obligation on the part of the Government to provide, through the Vote Office, large numbers of notes on clauses for every hon. Member. I regret that this much-sought-after volume of notes is out of print, but I shall see what can be done to get a few spare copies which might be handed around the Chamber to those hon. Members who have been drawn here by the debate.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. It is not a matter for debate now, but it may be at another time and elsewhere, as to whether the courtesy extended to members of a Committee in regard to the provision of notes on new clauses should be extended to the whole House. Perhaps some of my hon. Friends protest too much. When they get a copy of the notes on new clauses, they may not be greatly assisted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I think that we have gone far enough on this matter. It is time to return to the new clause and leave the notes on clauses.

Mr. Best: You have very properly schooled me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am sure that the House would wish me at the outset to express gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary and to those responsible for having allocated a whole day's debate to the Bill today, following the difficulties that several of us faced last Tuesday when the debate was finally adjourned in the small hours, not having started until 10.30 pm. I want to place on record my personal gratitude to my right hon. Friend for having allowed us a full debate on a matter which is of great importance to us all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not under-estimate the importance of the matter. The debate has been going on for several minutes and I am still waiting to hear the hon. Gentleman move the new clause. Does he wish to move it?

Mr. Best: I have moved it formally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I shall now address my mind entirely to the new clause.

As I was intimating a few moments ago, the three new clauses which we are discussing are similar in so far as they place a duty on the Secretary of State, but are different in the effect that they would have. Therefore, it is right to examine them as individual new clauses.

New Clause 6 requires the Secretary of State to

"make provision for constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom."

I tabled the new clause following the profound disquiet expressed by a large number of hon. Members from all parties represented in the House, and also because of great disquiet expressed by many of the general public. Indeed, I think it is right to say that there is a large measure of disquiet among members of the Government themselves. No fewer than 21 members of the Government have in the past expressed opposition to fluoridation. Of course, they are entitled to change their minds and it may be that they will go through the Lobby with the Govenment tonight. I do not intend to mention all those right hon. and hon. Friends by name, because I have not had the opportunity to say to them all that I would mention them, although I have to some of them. It is right to place on record that in the past, whatever the situation now, a quarter or more of the Government payroll vote were opposed to the artificial fluoridation of water supplies.

Mr. Marlow: I hope that I am not interfering with the flow of my hon. Friend's argument, which, as usual, is convincing and logical. My hon. Friend has passed over an important point and I hope that he will come back to it. His new clause specifies the United Kingdom. Can he tell the House why he has taken the United Kingdom as a whole? As I understand it, it is possible that in various component parts of the United Kingdom there are slightly different regimes and slightly different ways in which the matter is organised. Yet within his new clause he is grouping all parts of the United Kingdom together. Is there perhaps not a defect in his new clause? Perhaps he should treat the different parts of the United Kingdom in different ways. Can my hon. Friend enlighten the House on this?

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I do not want to digress from the essence of my remarks, but the first reason why I moved the new clause as presently constituted to include the whole of the United Kingdom was as an act of charity, as it were, to the Government. The Government use as an argument in favour of fluoridation the fact that fluoride occurs naturally in the water in some parts of the United Kingdom. Therefore, they ask why it should not be added artificially to the water in other parts.

If my new clause were to become part of the Bill it would enable the Government to demonstrate, through monitoring by the Secretary of State, what the levels of fluoride were in artificially fluoridated areas, compared to the levels in areas where fluoride occurs—I was about to use the word "naturally" but that would be wrong, because fluoride does not occur naturally as a constituent element of water; it is something that water picks up on its passage through the ground. That in itself is an important factor. That is one reason for drafting the new clause.

There is a second reason. My hon. Friend will have seen that the Bill, as drafted, applies to England, Wales and Scotland and that it is stated that an Order in Council will be dealt with by affirmative resolution of the House to include Northern Ireland. Therefore, for the sake of

completeness, and in anticipation that other parts of the Bill will become law, I drafted the new clause to include the whole of the United Kingdom.

As I was saying, new clause 6 requires the Secretary of State to monitor

"the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom."

Clause 1(5) states:

"Any health authority making arrangements with a statutory water undertaker in pursuance of an application shall ensure that those arrangements include provisions designed to secure that the concentration of fluoride in the water supplied to consumers in the area in question is, so far as is reasonably practicable, maintained at one milligram per litre."

Grave concern has been expressed that that subsection is, if I may use a phrase that seems appropriate in the circumstances, wishy-washy. That subsection is regarded by many of my hon. Friends as carte blanche for saying, "Take a stab in the dark; take it or leave it; do not bother to get it right, but just have round about the 1 mg per litre level and everybody will be satisfied." There is no provision in the Bill for the level of fluoride to be monitored by anybody, let alone by the Secretary of State, who is answerable to the House.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I share my hon. Friend's fears. Has he evidence that any monitoring goes on at present where fluoride has been added? If his new clause should be carried by the House, is he of the opinion that inevitably the Secretary of State will appoint the water authority to do the monitoring, because it would be bureaucratic to appoint other officials to go all over the country to carry out this role?

Mr. Best: I believe that monitoring is done by some water authorities, but I cannot quote chapter and verse. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) may be able to enlighten the House, or my right hon. and learned Friend may be able to do so. If the new clause is passed, the Secretary of State might well appoint the statutory water undertakers to do the monitoring. The point of the new clause is to fix on the Secretary of State the responsibility for monitoring. There must be grave concern in the House that there is no provision in the Bill for monitoring.

Secondly, if it were a discharge of the functions and duties of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the new laws merely to appoint the statutory water undertakings to effect the monitoring, that would be regarded by many, and certainly by myself, as a matter of great concern. Effectively, that would be removing the burden from the shoulders of my right hon. Friend and placing it on the shoulders of the water authorities, which are not directly elected authorities. We have already had a lengthy debate about the state of democracy in the absence of local control. It would be a matter of concern if the water authorities were able to undertake monitoring without being subject to my right hon. Friend's control.

The essence of new clause 6 is to ensure that the buck stops somewhere. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington is nodding in agreement, and I am grateful to him. Surely the buck should stop in this place. We must not say to water authorities or health authorities through the medium of the Bill that they can have a stab at getting it right and that they need not bother to get it absolutely right at 1 mg per litre. We should not imply that they can stick in the fluoride as they wish, or within the terms of "as far as is practicable", and follow that up by saying that the Bill contains no monitoring provision. Surely responsibility must lie fairly and squarely on the shoulders of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that water authorities have been set up as secret societies? The general public, the local press and the media generally do not have access to their meetings and cannot listen to their discussions prior to decisions being made. The hon. Gentleman must agree that there could be a complete cover-up if things went wrong. If the Government get away with the enactment of the Bill, an inspectorate should be set up to ensure that there is effective monitoring. We must remember that we are talking about a poison. In the mining industry, for example, there are inspectors whose role it is to ensure that everything is all right. If the Bill is enacted, an inspectorate should be established to ensure that there is proper monitoring in the interests of the people, bearing in mind that we are talking about a poison.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) that interventions should be brief.

Mr. Best: The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has raised two valuable points. He has suggested that secret societies will be making decisions, as the health authorities and water authorities do not allow the public access to their meetings. The hon. Gentleman has tabled an amendment which has been selected for discussion by Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that he will be able to catch your eye later in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am sure that he will address himself to the secretiveness, as it were, of the authorities. I hope that I, too, will be able to catch your eye when that debate takes place, so that I can make my contribution to it. I have great sympathy with the view which the hon. Gentleman has expressed. It is right that the general public should be present when decisions are taken in their name that will affect the health of every citizen. We must remember that no one can make a decision not to drink water. Therefore, we are discussing an issue that affects everyone.

The hon. Member for Ashfield made a second valuable point. He expressed his concern about the possibility of a cover-up. I do not indulge in arcane considerations of dark and devious methods that might be adopted by health authorities or water authorities. However, I can understand that those who are less charitable than myself, and perhaps more suspicious, might take the view that in certain circumstances those methods might be used. The hon. Gentleman has expressed a genuine fear, and it is one that should be assuaged by provisions in the Bill.

5.15 pm

In Annapolis in the United States there was a cover-up. Someone died as a result of too much fluoride being added to the water by mistake. The authority which investigated the matter said that it would never have been brought to its attention had it not been for the fact that those on renal dialysis units had been made ill and that one of them had died. That is a germane example to support the fear that the hon. Member for Ashfield has expressed.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I invite my hon. Friend to compare new clause 6 with new clauses 14 and 24 which I tabled but which have not been selected. New clause 6 suggests that there should be monitoring but

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

provides no method by which the public should be told of the results, whereas my new clauses would ensure that the information reached the public. In Annapolis the local water authority discovered that it had overdone the dosage and it decided to try to keep that quiet. Authorities would not have to publish figures under my hon. Friend's new clause, so the possibility of authorities deciding to keep things quiet would be even greater. Perhaps he will address himself to that.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend makes a valuable contribution to the debate, which we have come to expect of him. There is great concern about the way in which monitoring should be carried out and the effect of that monitoring.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Best: I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) wishes to intervene. I do not want to give way on many more occasions, as I want to proceed with my speech. I do not wish to delay the House too much.

Mr. Marlow: I apologise to my hon. Friend for intervening. I am grateful to him for giving way. I apologise, because I do not mean to be critical of my hon. Friend. This is a worthwhile new clause, but I take the point that has been made by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) about monitoring and inspection. My hon. Friend is putting it to the House that the Government or the Secretary of State should make provision for constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride in all parts of the United Kingdom. If that is to be done, it will have to be done somehow, by someone, by some people or by some organisation. I feel that it is unfair of my hon. Friend to bring forward the new clause to the Government, to the Secretary of State and to the Minister of Health without telling them what he has in his mind as to how this task should be carried out. I shall be interested to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a weakness in my argument. Perhaps it is my fault that he has done so, as I allowed him to intervene. I must confess to the House that the new clauses were drafted late at night or in the small hours of the morning. I do not pretend to be a parliamentary draftsman. I suspect that there may be defects in the clauses, and I hope that I shall be forgiven if that is the case. I hope also that my hon. Friend will consider the broad thrust of the argument and what I seek to achieve by way of the clauses.

In this instance, I am not prepared to accept the criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North and to agree that there is a defect, although there might be defects in other areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would introduce regulations to deal with the way in which monitoring should take place. The regulations would provide the detailed nuts and bolts if the new clause were to become part of the Bill.

I shall proceed to the other new clauses in the group, as I do not want to detain the House for too long on each one. However, before doing so I shall ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health a rhetorical question which I hope will stimulate him to leap to the Dispatch Box to answer me affirmatively and helpfully. What is the Government's objection to saying that someone should monitor the levels of fluoride in our water? How can there be any objection to that?

I shall listen with great care to what my right hon. and learned Friend has to say. It may be that, on behalf of the Government, he will not wish to see this new clause as part of the Bill, in which case I shall be interested to hear the arguments that he advances. I cannot for the life of me see how in a matter so fundamentally affecting the health of every citizen of this country anybody could object to a provision to ensure that there is a responsibility to check the levels from time to time. I ask nothing more than that, and that must be right.

I see nods of assent from several quarters, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take on board the fact that this new clause ought to be accepted by the Government, because it merely establishes the point that the Government should monitor the levels of fluoride in the water.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend wish to intervene?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is kind of my hon. Friend to allow me to anticipate the arguments with which I hope to persuade him in due course. At the moment, when fluoride is added it is regularly monitored by the water authorities, and has been for many years. We have been adding fluoride for 30 years and there has never been any untoward incident or anybody previously demanding that the Department should take on this obligation. There is nothing wrong with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend, but if a new obligation is to be taken on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services we shall need extra manpower to deal with that extra obligation, to no apparent purpose.

Mr. Best: I am deeply concerned, indeed, at what my right hon. and learned Friend has just said. It seems to me that he is seeking to pass the buck by saying that the Government should not be responsible for monitoring the levels of fluoride. Surely the Secretary of State should be responsible to the House, and the only way that we can make him responsible is by placing on him a duty to monitor the levels of fluoride. My right hon. and learned Friend is saying that we cannot afford to employ more manpower.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have many methods of protecting public safety. We have here a perfectly harmless method of adding fluoride to water. There is fail-safe machinery and there are competent people in the water authorities who have been monitoring this successfully for 30 years, with no public complaint. There are one or two things for which the Department would like to employ manpower and resources.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend makes the point again that manpower is a problem, so let us concentrate on the other aspect of what he has just said that concerns me. I am sure that the people of Annapolis, before the incident which led to somebody's death, would have said that fluoride had been added to the water without any incident so far, so they need not bother about monitoring the levels. I am sure that that sort of thing is always said before there is a fatal accident or something else terrible happens. I am sure that the people of Bhopal said, before the accident, that there had never been an accident at the chemical works, so it must be all right.

Is my right hon. and learned Friend really seeking to make the case that since everything has gone all right in the past there is no obligation on the Government to do anything? I find that very unpersuasive indeed, and I can only hope that by the time he gets to the Dispatch Box he will have thought of a better argument. If not, I suspect that he will not carry the House with him.

Mr. Michael Brown: My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health really ought to consider the appraisal by Lord Douglas of the report on fluoridation by the Royal College of Physicians in 1976, in which a comparative study was made of about 10 cities in the United States. An analysis was done of the cancer death rates. Some cities had been adding fluoride to the water since the war, while other cities had been adding it only since the 1960s. The jump in cancer deaths is most interesting. I think that my right hon. and learned Friend, in answering my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), should take on board very seriously the appraisal in this report.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I shall quote some examples of studies which have demonstrated the problems resulting from adding fluoride to water supplies. It appears that some of those studies are not known about by the Government. I have a reason for saying that, which I will advance in due course.

I have not forgotten about new clause 11, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it would be convenient for the House, I think, if I were to concentrate next on new clause 18. It is very simple in its phraseology, but its effect is terribly important for the individual liberty of subjects of this country. The clause reads:

"If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application made under section 1(1)."

I was advised a moment ago by Mr. Speaker and also by one of the learned Clerks, who was most helpful, that this new clause is defective in some way. I think that it is defective because the word "terminate" and the words "Secretary of State" appear in the same sentence. *[Laughter.]* I was not seeking to amuse the House.

Mr. Fairbairn: I should have thought, being a simpler person, that one cannot terminate an application. What is being terminated is what results from the application.

Mr. Best: I am most grateful to my hon. and learned Friend, and I must confess to sloppy draftsmanship again, for which I hope the House will forgive me. However, I hope this will mean that my right hon. and learned Friend can get the best of both worlds. He can ask the House to vote against the new clause because it is defective and say that the Government will move their own new clause which will effectively put things right and establish the principle which I am seeking to establish. I hope that such a new clause will be moved in the other place by the Government to ensure that the effect of my new clause becomes part of the Bill. I believe that this is fundamental, because the new clause says that if it appears to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride causes harm to health—I do not make any judgment on this in the new clause, although I shall advance arguments in a moment to demonstrate that there is significant evidence that fluoride causes harm to health—he will ensure that the artificial fluoridation of the water supply shall cease.

What can be wrong with that? What possible objection can there be to that? If it appears that it causes harm, the Secretary of State, with whom the buck should stop, and who is answerable to the House, should tell the statutory water authority to cease fluoridation forthwith. At the present time—unless my right hon. and learned Friend can correct me—there is no provision in the Bill for ceasing to add fluoride to the water supply even if it appears harmful to health.

Although it stretches the bounds of credibility a little wide to suggest that any health authority would not withdraw an application for fluoridation of the water supplies if it became obvious that there was a danger to health, how can one know the level of perversity of a health authority, a non-elected body? How can we in this House, who are answerable to our constituents, be sure that a health authority, composed of experts who now are prepared to recommend that people should have mass-medication through the artificial addition of fluoride to their water supplies, who are not subject to any democratic control whatsoever, who are adopting the attitude of Big Brother, the nanny state, and saying, "We know what is good for you; therefore you must have fluoride," when confronted with evidence that fluoride is harmful to the health, will withdraw its application? There is no guarantee whatsoever. There is nothing whatsoever in the Bill as at present constituted which would ensure that a health authority, in these circumstances, would withdraw its application.

That is perhaps the Bill's gravest defect. There may be a great body of evidence to show that fluoride is harmful to health, but that will not stop the health authority saying, "Aha, but we do not believe that evidence. We know best. We know that it is not harmful to health. We will discount that evidence." If it discounts that evidence, there is nothing in the Bill — no matter how plausible and persuasive the evidence—to prevent it from continuing to add fluoride to the water supplies.

5.30 pm

Mr. Fairbairn: I have two matters that I wish to raise. First, we are talking, not about mass medication, but about the force feeding of a medicinal product. If we all had chicken-pox and were made to take something to cure it, that would be mass medication. We are talking about the forced feeding of a medicinal toxic product when people are not suffering from any relevant illness. Secondly, the important point is not that it may be shown to be harmful, but that if just one person can be shown to have developed an illness—whether or not it is reversible—as a result of adding that toxic medicinal compound to the water supply, we surely have enough evidence to withdraw fluoride from the water supply.

Mr. Best: I have to say with great heaviness of heart and disappointment that that is not the Government's view.

Mr. Fairbairn: I know.

Mr. Best: I share my hon. and learned Friend's views on this matter. I believe that the right of an individual —however insignificant he may be in society—not to be harmed by Government action is something that must be considered. We should view it with the gravest concern when that person stands to be harmed by the actions not even of the Government but of a non-elected body that is not answerable to anyone.

[Mr. Best]

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has touched on a significant point. People will not be satisfied when my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister says, "Just because it has been all right in the past, nothing will happen in the future." I hope that I have not done my right hon. and learned Friend a disservice in paraphrasing him in that way.

Mr. Fairbairn: What about thalidomide?

Mr. Best: I was not going to mention that, because I do not wish to be accused of scaremongering. There is a great danger of being accused of that when discussing this subject. Consequently, when I present my evidence that harm can be caused to individuals and other things, I shall choose my words very carefully. The debate will no doubt be followed closely by those who are directly concerned. Hon. Members should bear in mind, incidently, that everyone is directly concerned, because we all have to drink water. I do not want to be emotive or to cause those of us who passionately believe that the Government are wrong to be accused of using scaremongering tactics.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I would not want my hon. Friend to push the thalidomide example too far, but is not the importance of that example that we are dealing once again with doctors, dentists and medical scientists who assert with absolute conviction that it is safe to fluoridate the water, and who ignore all the warnings? We are saying only that there were doctors and scientists who asserted with equal conviction that thalidomide was safe. They also ignored the warnings and were ultimately proved wrong. There is, after all, some doubt about the safety that medical and scientific men assert with great conviction, and scientists who advocate flouridation should remember how wrong the scientists were about thalidomide. They should remember also the other mistakes that the scientific community has made.

Mr. Best: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. I also agreed with what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross said about the importance of the individual. If it can be demonstrated that one individual, however insignificant, may be harmed, that is sufficient reason to say that there should be a safeguard in the Bill. I do not even have to go as far as my hon. and learned Friends the Members for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and for Perth and Kinross, because the new clause says only:

> "If . . . it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of flouride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application".

Unless my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister can put forward a cogent argument, I shall remain unable to see what is wrong with giving my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the right to stop the artificial fluoridation of water supplies when it has been demonstrated that it is harmful. The corollary of rejecting my new clause must be that the Secretary of State will be satisfied that it is harmful, and will do nothing. As drafted, that is the effect of the Bill. I wish to protect my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State from that invidious situation and from the criticism that will be levelled at him when it is demonstrated that the artificial fluoridation of water supplies is harmful to health and he sits back and does nothing, because he has no power under the Bill to do anything. That will lead to considerable concern, dis and criticism. It may cause his resignation and could cause the Government to fall. I certainly wish to pr my right hon. Friend from that.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West) *rose*—

Mr. Best: I give way to the hon. Member for Le West (Mr. Meadowcroft).

Mr. Meadowcroft: Whatever else one might ac the Minister for Health of, it cannot be said that he i about intervening. Indeed, he could sometimes be acc of intervening too much.

We keep returning to the principle of fluoridati understand that hon. Members feel very strongly abo but will the hon. Gentleman accept that those in favo adding fluoride to the water supply feel equally stro about the possible dangers and about the need to mo the situation? Is he aware that that point was raise Committee in relation to perhaps the most mino afflictions, that of discoloration and dental mottling response to a point made by me in Committee, w appears at column 50 of *Hansard*, the Under-Secreta State said that water was already monitored where flu occurred naturally. Even if the concentration amoun only two points per milligram, there may be a possib of discoloration. If that happens, the water is diluted. hon. Gentleman keeps returning to the principle inste tackling the point about whether monitoring goes on

Mr. Best: With great——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Respect.

Mr. Best: The word would not come out w referring to a Liberal. With great respect to the Gentleman—because I and other hon. Members grateful to him and his colleagues last Tuesday supporting new clause 1 which requires the whole mea to be subject to some consultation and democratic co —we stand on opposite sides of the fence. He beli in the efficacy of fluoride and that it should be adde the water supply. Nevertheless, I suspect that what u both him and I——

Mr. Fairbairn: Him and me.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Fri Perhaps I should have said, "him and me". I hope tha hon. and learned Friend is right about that. What conc the hon. Member for Leeds, West, and other Members, including myself—if I may put it that wa is that whatever is said about the monitoring that goe now, it is surely right that the Secretary of State shoul charged with the ability to insist on cessation of artificial fluoridation of water supplies if it appears to — he is, after all, answerable to the House — fluoride is harmful. However hard the hon. Membe Leeds, West puts the case, he cannot argue tha fluoridation appears to be harmful there is a provisio the Bill to stop it by order of the Secretary of S because there is none. We must rely on the good of of the health authority. I am not sure whether every Member has consummate faith in the good office health authorities.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Best: I apologise to my hon. Friend, and I hope that he will forgive me, but I wish to continue. I have been most generous and given way often.

Mr. Marlow: It is an important point.

Mr. Best: I am sorry, but I must continue. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me and that he will have an opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and advance his points in his own inimitable way. I have delayed the House for a long time, and I have a considerable amount more to say. I have not yet put to the House the evidence on which I base my argument. I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to continue and will remain in a sedentary position.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) must not persist. He has heard the hon. Gentleman say repeatedly that he will not give way.

Mr. Best: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I must continue.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister a rhetorical question, which I hope will stimulate him to leap to the Dispatch Box and give an answer which will assuage all the fears of the House and leave me in a happy frame of mind. I hope he will say that, although the new clause may be defective, he will ensure that in another place the Government will table an amendment which will have precisely the same effect, of giving the Secretary of State the power to stop fluoridation where it appears to be harmful. I can see no objection to that. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to give that assurance. I see that he is suffering from sedentary cramp and is unable to come to the Dispatch Box. In all seriousness, I regret that. It is sad, because I drafted the amendment most carefully and in a way that was as generous as possible to the Government so that they could accept it without demur and without its diminishing the other aspects of the Bill.

I make no bones about the fact that I oppose the entire Bill. However, we are not debating the principle of the Bill or having a Second Reading debate. That has been obtained, and I am now genuinely seeking to table amendments which will ameliorate the effects of the Bill and assuage some fears. I greatly regret that my right hon. and learned Friend is unable to make that one concession, which is more of a safeguard than a concession. I suspect that in his heart of hearts he believes it to be right.

Mr. Marlow: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and sorry to have been so persistent, but I, too, wish to be helpful. My hon. Friend has alarmed the House. As my right hon. and learned Friend has not been able to respond to my hon. Friend's point, will my hon. Friend, as a lawyer, give the House some free advice? My hon. Friend has built up a vision of a rogue health authority to which proof has been brought that fluoride is causing harm to those who drink the water in its area. My hon. Friend has properly tabled an amendment to deal with that. If his amendment falls, people will be force-fed fluoride, knowing that it is doing them harm. That is terrifying. Will my hon. Friend reassure me that the Minister and the Secretary of State have power to do something about that appalling position, if it arises?

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend has a charitable view of lawyers if he thinks that any of them will give free advice. If what my hon. Friend describes comes to pass and the new clause is not incorporated in the Bill, no one will be required to stop artificial fluoridation if it appears to be harmful. One will have to rely on the better nature of the health authority or the statutory water undertaker. In those circumstances, if harm were done to an individual, there would be no way of stopping fluoridation by order, and therefore the only recourse would be for the harmed person to apply to a court for an injunction to have fluoridation stopped because the effect of the fluoridation had harmed him. The court would undoubtedly grant an injunction to stop the statutory water undertaker from adding fluoride to the water if it could be demonstrated that that was the best way to resolve the matter before the case was given a final hearing.

5.45 pm

The only remedy would be in damages. That is precisely why the Secretary of State indemnifies local authorities now. My right hon. Friend accepts that damage may be done. If he were satisfied that fluoridation could never cause harm, there would be no need for an indemnity. Why does my right hon. Friend indemnify statutory water undertakers in the event of their being sued by an individual who has suffered harm as a result of the artificial addition of fluoride to water supplies if he does not believe that fluoridation could cause harm? I hope that I have answered my hon. Friend's point. My answer does not give me any comfort, and I doubt whether it comforts him, but it is the reality. I hope that I have interpreted the matter correctly. If I have not, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, who is also a lawyer, will come to the Dispatch Box and correct me.

I took the new clauses out of order because new clause 18 followed naturally on new clause 6, and I shall now deal with new clause 11. It requires the Secretary of State to

"establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and aquatic life

and to report the result of such monitoring to each House of Parliament every 12 months."

What harm can such a provision do? What is wrong with putting a responsibility on the Secretary of State, who is answerable to the House, to monitor the effects of the addition of fluoride to water supplies to ascertain whether it benefits health and teeth, or harms health, and plant and aquatic life. Is that not of material significance and importance to every hon. Member and every member of the general public who is having fluoride added to his or her water supply without his or her consent? It is a fundamental matter.

I do not wish to detain the House for much longer, but I must deal with the evidence that gave rise to my tabling the new clause and to the grave anxiety that is shared by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends about the effect of the Bill if it is unamended by my new clause. Despite the greatly increased incidence of dental fluorosis, that is mottling, in fluoridated countries, parents continue to be advised to give their children fluoridated toothpastes, tablets and vitamin drops.

The evil of that advice is graphically illustrated in a letter to the *American National Fluoridation News*, in which a mother writes about the harm caused by giving fluoride vitamin drops to her second child. She wrote:

[Mr. Best]

"This child was born in a year when fluoride vitamin drops were the 'in thing', and he is now a constant reminder of my brainwashing. He has turned eight and his second teeth are coming in yellow like his first.

Jennifer, the little girl across the street, has also been given fluoride vitamin drops for the first five years of her life, causing her baby teeth to be discoloured. Now that she is five going six her second teeth are coming in and she is suffering from a disease that will not only affect her physically, but could very well submerge an already shy personality. Jennifer has fluorosis, and her top teeth are vertically striped and the bottom ones are mottled."

In this mother's opinion the dentist should be sued for malpractice. She ends the letter:

"Those of us in the neighbourhood who have children with fluorosis are torn between the urge to show everyone the damage fluoride can do, and the desire to spare the children's feelings by not asking them to show their diseased teeth."

I do not refer to the veracity of the claim by the mother in that letter. I do not advance her claim as being truthful or otherwise, but she expresses a fear, and it is right that I should articulate fears expressed elsewhere in the world where fluoride has been added to water supplies. It is for the House and the public to determine whether what that lady says is based upon truth.

In April 1984 *Here's Health* carried an article entitled "Fluoride—the Threat to your Children". Some of my examples are from Scotland because fluoride has been added to the water supplies in Scotland. The cause celebre of Mrs. McColl of Strathclyde led to the Government introducing the Bill. In that case, it was proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the addition of fluoride to the water was illegal. The Government seek to ensure that what is now illegal is no longer illegal. They are turning the law on its head.

The Government are entitled to do that. Parliament can pass a law declaring that black is white. Parliament is sovereign and can do what it likes. However, that does not allay grave anxieties. After all, a court of law has declared a practice to be illegal—ultra vires—and the House is now being asked to say that what is illegal should be made legal.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not think that my hon. Friend should jump to the conclusion that if the Bill becomes law—pray God it will not—fluoridation will be legal. Page 276 of Lord Jaunceys extensive judgment points out that sodium chloride is a medicinal product. We are dealing with more complex substances in the Bill.

A letter from the Committee on Safety of Medicines says that the products, fluorosilicic acid and sodium silicate fluoride have not been considered by the committee and have not been licensed for sale as medicinal products. Even if the Bill became law—I trust that it will not—it would remain illegal for those products to be added to the water supply as medicinal products.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are straying towards matters which are more appropriate to the Second Reading and which were dealt with thoroughly in that debate.

Mr. Best: I shall resist the temptation to answer my hon. and learned Friend's intervention.

In a leading article entitled "The Water Argument" on 12 November last year, the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* stated:

"Now that there is suspicion of cancer triggering by fluoridation, the responsibility on the experts and councillors who argue that the substance is wholly beneficial is greater t ever. The expert can plead that it was the best knowle available at the time he advised the action. The councillor votes for fluoridation has an even greater responsibility. He to say that he, not them, gives the authority to carry out project."

Again, I make no judgment about the veracity or otherv of the contents of that article. I merely present it to House as an expression of concern. The House and public must determine wherein the truth lies, if there any truth in such a submission.

The House will agree that my argument is modest is that when such fears are expressed, it is the hei arrogance for any Government to argue that there sho be no capacity for informing the public of the effect of artificial addition of fluoride to the water supply. I re having to use the word "arrogant", but by rejecting the clause, as I suspect my right hon. and learned Friend seek to do, he displays that arrogance. I acknowledge he acts, not personally, but on behalf of the Governm

I do not like that arrogance in anybody. I do not to see it in a Government whom I have had the pleas and privilege to support on so many of the measures they have brought to the House and for the way in wh they have governed the country for the last five y through a difficult time. I do not like to level that critici but I must do so, because for the Government not to acc the new clause is tantamount to saying, "We do not th that the people should be informed. We do not think it is necessary or relevant. We do not think that peo have the right to be informed about the effect of fluo on health, on teeth and on animal and plant life."

The Government are saying, "Go ahead, fluorid away to your heart's content." They are saying to l elected bodies in England and Wales, "We shall not any bars on your action. We shall not make you s fluoridating water even if it is shown to be harmful. are not even going to require you or the Secretary of S to tell people about the effects". All that my new cla seeks to do is to remedy that so that the Government t account of sensitivities and are mindful of the need ensure that no legislation is passed without full acco being taken of sensitivities and fears, rightly or wron expressed.

It is important that we do not display arrogance towa people. We are charged with the responsibility legislating in ways that affect millions of our fel countrymen. For us to say that it does not matter whet people are told what is going on is arrogant and wron

An article in the *Kilmarnock Standard* on 17 Aug last year stated:

"Compulsory medication is only allowed by a court order the mentally ill. Each person is put into this category when water is fluoridated. This is easily recognised as a form dictatorship."

Again, I make no judgment. I do not want those rema to be attributed to me, I make no judgment about veracity of that statement, but I draw it to the attentio my right hon. and learned Friend and the House beca it is important that such fears are articulated. If the Bi passed unamended, this is the last time that such fears be articulated. They will not be ventilated through mechanism in the Bill, because there is no s mechanism.

An article in the Glasgow *Evening Times*, on October last year, stated:

"The World Health Organisation are quoted in the cu autumn issue of Homeopathy Today as having reached a ge

consensus that 'all citizens have a right to health, and to medical care of their choice.' Both principles are about to be flouted by our Government in their proposed Bill to alter Scottish law to legalise compulsory water fluoridation in Scotland — thus annihilating the inherent rights of individuals and exposing those with allergies to fluorides to unnecessary illness and suffering."

6 pm

In the *Sunday Telegraph* on 18 November 1984, Mary Kenny said:

"I have always accepted that fluoride in the water supplies is a sensible, constructive measure. My dentist, among others, has convinced me of the evidence as to its benefits: he says it does no harm, and it is a powerful prophylactic against tooth decay, particularly in young children.

Moreover, I have grown up with a prejudice against anti-fluoride campaigners, who have been widely regarded as rather eccentric."

[Interruption.] There is a note of amusement in the House. It may be true that some of the campaigners are eccentric. Miss Kenny continued:

"Yet there are quite reasonable questions to be asked about fluoridation, and the anti-fluoride campaigners are by no means wild-eyed men and women with crazed conspiracy fancies . . . But why not just wait and see a little longer. It is always possible that the anti-fluoride campaigners really do have a point."

On 25 November 1984 Commander Hyde Burton commented on that article, saying:

"A fact that Mary Kenny didn't bring out in last week's item about fluoridation was that 98-99 per cent. of all expenditure on fluoridation would be entirely wasted. Speaking as an ex-chairman of a statutory water company I think I am right in saying that of all water circulated only about 5 per cent. is used for drinking purposes and only a tiny proportion of that would go down the throats of children under 12 whose teeth might benefit.

No less important, of course, is the ethical aspect of mass-medication and the possible side effects of fluoridation. In my view it should be prevented at all costs."

On 28 January 1984 my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton tabled questions to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. He asked my right hon. Friend

"(1) if he will list the sources of any evidence available to his Department of the upper limit of consumption of fluoride before *(a)* the teeth begin to discolour through mottling and *(b)* harm to health may begin to result;

(2) if he will list the sources of any evidence available to his Department of the degree of mottling of children and young persons' teeth from water fluoridated naturally or artificially to one part per million;

(3) if he will list the sources of any evidence available to his Department of the effect of a high concentration of magnesium and calcium in water containing natural fluoride at levels at or above one part per million."

I cannot do my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State any more disservice than he was done in Standing Committee when it was pointed out that in a former incarnation he had been an opponent of fluoride. I do not criticise him for that, because people are entitled to change their minds. Thank heavens hon. Members are capable of changing their minds in the light of new evidence. In the past, my hon. Friend said that it was his duty to oppose the use of fluoride, but he is now the Minister responsible for fluoridation.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will my hon. Friend check whether those children who have signs of mottled teeth have also been on antibiotics, which, taken from an early stage in life, can lead to mottling of the teeth?

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that there are many causes of the harm done to children's teeth. I am sure that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not digress, because if I did so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would call me to order. I do not wish to digress into what other matters may cause harm to children's teeth. I am concerned about the mottling of children's teeth because fluoride has been added to the water supplies.

Mr. Lawrence: Has my hon. Friend grasped the significance of the intervention by our hon. Friend from Scotland——

Mrs. McCurley: I represent Renfrew, West and Inverclyde. I should like to represent the whole of Scotland.

Mr. Lawrence: I am sure that in beauty my hon. Friend does so. I refer to the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) and all parts north, south, east and west. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) said that children may have mottled teeth because they have drunk fluoridated water. If that fact were known generally, people might have different views on whether it is right to fluoridate water, since so many of their children have to be on antibiotics.

Mr. Best: If I have been misled, it may be because of the charm exhibited by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and the beauty of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). I apologise to the House if I have been so misled. I shall not develop that point. No doubt my hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend will have an opportunity to catch Mr. Speaker's eye later.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Best: I am loth to give way, because I have given way on a number of occasions. I must draw the line. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way.

In answer to that parliamentary question, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said:

"The question of dental mottling was studied in the United States of America before the introduction of public water fluoridation. It was found that at a concentration of fluoride of about two parts per million an increasing proportion of children had mottled enamel that was apparent and objectionable aesthetically (Dean HT and Elvore E Further studies on the minimal threshold of chronic endemic dental fluorosis—Pub Health Rep 52: 1249-64 10 September 1937)."

The Bill says to the water authorities, "Take a stab at it. Do not get it absolutely right with a concentration of one part per million. Get it right in so far as is reasonably practicable." What happens if the water authorities do not get it right? What will happen if "so far as is reasonably practicable" means that there will be a concentration, not of one part per million, but of two parts per million of fluoride in the water supplies? We know what will happen, because my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has given the answer. My hon. Friend will say that children will have "mottled enamel" which is "apparent and objectionable aesthetically". Will we condemn our children to that? Do hon. Members have a right to do that? They do not.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State went on:

"There have been a number of studies contrasting the prevalence of dental mottling, which may have various causes, in comparable fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas. A review of the evidence is, for example, contained in pages 349-354 of Lord Jauncey's opinion in the Strathclyde fluoridation case.

[Mr. Best]

Lord Jauncey concluded:

'if the drinking water in Strathclyde is fluoridated to one part per million there is likely to be a very small increase in the prevalence of mottling of a type which will only be noticeable at very close quarters and . . . is very unlikely to create any aesthetic problems for the owners of the teeth'."

I hope that people are satisfied with my hon. Friend quoting Lord Jauncey's opinion:

"there is likely to be a very small increase in the prevalence of mottling",

but do not worry about that because it

"will only be noticeable at very close quarters and . . . is very unlikely to create any aesthetic problems for the owners of the teeth." — [*Official Report*, 28 January 1985; Vol. 72, c. 55-56.]

It will not create any problems for the owners of the teeth if they do not open their mouths and smile. It goes beyond the realms of credibility for the Government to introduce such a measure when the Minister, in answer to a parliamentary question as recently as 28 January, quoted Lord Jauncey who said that there will be mottling at one part per million, which is what is in the Bill—not at a higher level—in effect saying, "Do not worry. It will not be aesthetically unpleasant because it will only be noticeable at close quarters." The answer is not to be in close quarters with anyone because they might spot that one has mottled teeth as a result of fluoride being added to the water supplies. I find that completely unacceptable. I say that with all the force at my command.

The retiring chief dental officer of New Zealand, where fluoridation started more than 30 years ago said——

Mr. Lawrence: Auckland.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend, but I believe that Auckland is in New Zealand. The retiring chief dental officer said:

"Children's teeth are being harmed by fluoridation."

Tooth decay mercifully is not as rampant now as it was some 10-15 years ago. Studies have shown, for example, that there is less tooth decay among children in non-fluoridated Bristol, west Sussex and the south-west Thames region than in artificially fluoridated Anglesey, Scunthorpe and Newcastle upon Tyne. Does that not give the lie to those who say, "Put fluoride in your water supplies because it will ensure that your children's teeth will be all right"? That is rubbish. It may have some effect, but if people want their children's teeth to be all right they must tell them not to eat sweets and other sticky things which will cause dental caries.

There is a danger that if fluoride is added to the water supplies people will take a more relaxed attitude about whether children should eat sweets, because they will say, "That is all right. Go along. Have a sweet. It will not harm your teeth much because fluoride has been added to the water supplies and the experts tell us that that stops dental caries." That is a dangerous philosophy. Every dentist will say that the only way to stop dental caries is not by drinking fluoridated water but by not eating sticky sweets or anything of that nature. Taylor and Taylor of Texas university found that one part per million of fluoride increases tumour incidence growth by 13 to 17 per cent. I shall go through the points quickly, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the House will forgive me——

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): We must absorb it all.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman says that we absorb it all. Unfortunately, that will be the case citizens of this country. They will absorb it all if t goes through. That is one of the matters that worri I hope that the House will forgive me if I go at some because I realise that I have been speaking at great and I do not wish to detain the House for a moment than necessary.

Professor Mohammed of Missouri universit produced nine papers showing the mutagenic poter one part per million that exists especially for *[Laughter.]* My right hon. and learned Friend is con with mirth at the suggestion that genetic damage t may be caused by fluoride. I hope that he was not la at that, because if he were, that does not say much Government's belief that animals should be us testing a variety of drugs before they are tested on hu

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend must not feel t House is pressing him. These issues are vital and imp and they are also complex. Please, please will m Friend not rush what he is putting forward? It is co I am bearing with him so far. He mentioned the mutagenic. My hon. Friend is a lawyer, perhaps explain what is meant by that word. I have a feelin it means something can have a genetic effect upon mammals or other animals which would mean that they were born they would be missing some o components or physical attributes. If that is what m Friend means by the word, which I have not met b it is a serious matter and I would ask him to slow

6.15 pm

Mr. Best: The word comes from mutatus genu Latin, and it means what my hon. Friend says something that has an effect on genetics. I do not b that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for (Mr. Lawrence) agrees with me. I shall not give w fear that his knowledge may be superior and I sh found wanting.

Dr. Goester of the rheumatology and rehabil centre at the University hospital of Lausan Switzerland found that the accumulation of fluorid patient's bone tissue led to spontaneous fractures neck of both thigh bones. Dr. Allen London, past pre of the American Academy of Dental Medicine, sa

"Any degree of dental fluorosis, even the least detect an abnormality and is due to the toxic action of fluoride tissues forming the tooth."

Dr. Phillips, professor of biochemistry at the uni of Wisconsin, said:

"A fluoridated tooth can become carious and once there is no satisfactory repair."

The pro-fluoridation *British Dental Journal* in 196 said that 10 per cent. of children consuming fluoridation at one part per million suffered from degree of enamel mottling, indicating some degree o effect. It would appear that the *British Dental Journ* my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for and Social Security agree that fluoride in the supplies causes enamel mottling, which, in the view hon. Friend — adopting Lord Jauncey's view aesthetically unpleasant only at close quarters.

The new clause deals with the effect of fluoride o and the harm that it may do to other substances. In there was an investigation into the increase in plu corrosion as a result of fluoridisation. The study w

up by the Kennedy engineers in 1970 and it said that by 1976, plumbing corrosion costs in Seattle would be in excess of $7 million per year or about $30 for each dwelling. The report stated:

"Fluoridation significantly increases the rate of corrosion for copper, galvanised steel and black steel piping."

In 1956, the newsletter of the Australian Institute of Plumbers said that the corrosive action of fluoride would require the replacing of the underground water mains of the North Andover public water supply. It said:

"Fluoride is softening the heavy rust formation that has collected on the inside of the town water mains over the years, to a semi-soft consistency."

That is some of the evidence of the effects of fluoride on pipes and of its corrosive nature. I do not pass judgment on whether fluoride corrodes pipes, I merely bring these matters to the attention of the House because I believe that they should be mentioned so that hon. Members will be better informed about the matter when they go into the Lobby tonight, I hope, behind me.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary should have had some knowledge of those matters and the problems of corrosion, but, alas, that does not appear to be the case.

Today, I received an answer to a parliamentary question of mine, in which I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment

"if any studies have been brought to his attention which indicate that fluoride when added to the water supplies has a corrosive or degenerative effect on the vessels through which it passes."

Nothing could be clearer than that. I have already drawn to the attention of the House the evidence of corrosion. One would have hoped that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have been aware of these matters. He replied:

"No. Fluoridation schemes have been in operation in various parts of the country for up to thirty years and there is no evidence that the addition of fluoride at a concentration of one part per million has had any effect on the corrosive properties of the water. An American Water Works Association manual on fluoridation states that there has been no reported instance of pipeline corrosion in the United States traceable to the fluoride content of water."

What of the evidence that I have just brought to the attention of the House? I have never heard of the American Water Works Association manual, although my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health may use it as bedtime reading better to inform himself about these matters before coming to the House to argue them out. It appears that it had never heard of the evidence to which I have just drawn the attention of the House, although the Government appear to be basing their case on the American Water Works Association manual.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Does my hon. Friend have some regard for the employment implications of this argument? If he were right, we could fluoridate the water, destroy our drainage systems and sewers and then have a massive capital programme to replace them, which would employ a great number of people, which would fit in with the political dogma advanced from some parts of the House. How would my hon. Friend feel about that argument?

Mr. Best: I regret to say that I do not find my hon. Friend's argument persuasive, and I do not wish to adopt it. I speak as a Member with the privilege of representing a constituency that, sadly, suffers from an unemployment level of 23 per cent. Whatever the employment implications, this matter is of such fundamental importance to the individual's health and what should be the individual's right to make decisions affecting himself and his health, that they must be put on one side. One cannot ignore the importance of this matter as it affects the health of individuals.

I know that my hon. Friend will accept the sincerity with which I say that, as a Member representing a constituency suffering from such an alarmingly high level of unemployment. Not a day passes without my concerning myself about matters of unemployment in Anglesey. I suspect that he will have similar concerns for his constituency, as we all do. However, I hope that he will agree that this matter is of such importance that even these matters of employment, important as they are, should be secondary to ethical matters and matters of the individual's freedom and right to make decisions about his health.

Studies have been done into the enzyme effects. A Swedish biochemist, a Nobel prize winner for his work on enzyme chemistry has said:

"as far as is known the toxic effect of fluoride is due solely to its inhibitor effect on many enzyme systems."

Dr. Robert Harris of the Nutritional Biochemistry Laboratories, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Rae, PhD in biochemistry and organics at the University of Toronto, McGowan and Suttie at the University of Wisconsin in the *Journal of Nutrition*—I could go on and on, but I shall not do so because I do not wish to delay the House any longer. The evidence is there and I do not have the time to articulate all of it, much as I would wish to. I do not wish to test the patience of the House. Therefore, I shall not develop the argument as I might do, and I can only hope that some of my hon. Friends will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and develop some points themselves.

Dr. Emsley, reader in chemistry in King's college, concluded that Fluoride's strong hydrogen bond with amides

"has markedly increased the credibility of earlier claims of genetic damage, cancer and allergy from low fluoride levels."

I want the House to understand, and I hope that the general public will understand, that I make no judgment on the veracity or otherwise of the claims made in these studies. I do not pretend or purport to have the knowledge or understanding of these matters to enable me to make a valid judgment on those issues. All I do, and believe that it is right that I should do, is to bring those matters to the attention of the House. It is right that the House, when it votes on these matters of such importance, should do so as well-informed as possible of both sides of the argument, and not just on the argument that I seek to advance.

Mr. Jessel: Was not all that gone into and decided on in the Strathclyde case? Why is my hon. Friend talking as though the Strathclyde case had never happened?

Mr. Best: With great respect to my hon. Friend, one cannot talk as though the Strathclyde case had never happened, because if it had not happened we should not have the Bill before the House. It is because the Strathclyde case found that the addition of fluoride to the water supply was ultra vires that we have the Bill before the House.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the Strathclyde case, all the evidence, and the counter-evidence to which my hon. Friend has not referred, was heard. Lord Jauncey came to the conclusion that fluoride was a safe and useful additive to water. All the evidence that my hon. Friend has been

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

giving was rejected because it runs in the teeth of more reputable and more acceptable scientific evidence that goes in the opposite direction.

Mr. Best: I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will understand why, and I hope that he will make no criticism of me for having done so, I do not advance the evidence of the other side of the argument. It is right that the House should hear the evidence of both sides of the argument. I do not articulate the evidence against the propositions that I have put because I do not have the time and it would be wrong of me to delay the House to do that. I would willingly do it, because I think that it is right that all these matters should be put fairly so that the House can make its decision. I do not do that now because of the time factor.

What is more, I know only too well that my right hon. and learned Friend, who is second to none in his powers of advocacy, will come to the Dispatch Box and will use all those powers to advance the argument against my arguments. It is right that the House should have it in that way. I hope that, in those circumstances, my right hon. and learned Friend will not think that I am being disingenuous or seeking to mislead the House by not advancing the arguments that I know that he will be advancing in due course. I must rest my case on the evidence that I refer.

Both my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) spoke about Lord Jauncey having much of this evidence in front of him. It is true that he rejected much of it, but it is also true that in other courts of law in the world, that evidence has not been rejected, but accepted. I suspect that neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor my hon. Friend would wish to base their case on the single judgment of one judge in Scotland.

Mr. Jessel: The case took over a year.

Mr. Best: However long it took for the learned judge to come to his conclusion does not enhance the quality of the conclusion at the end. I must caution my hon. Friend. It would be wrong for the House to base this legislation entirely on the decision of one judge, however learned, authoritative and well-informed. As soon as the House does that it relinquishes its legislative responsibility to the judiciary. Although I hold the judiciary in high respect, an opinion that is foreign to some hon. Members, I do not believe that it would conclude that this House should relinquish its legislative functions to the judiciary.

6.30 pm

Mr. Fairbairn: I have had the privilege of appearing before every judge who has sat on the senior bench in Scotland during the last 25 years, Lord Jauncey included. My hon. Friend's point is fallacious. It is not for a judge to come to a decision on medical and scientific evidence, except for the purposes of a civil claim. It is not for a judge to say that Professor Blogg has said that one should have one's haemorrhoids surgically removed and that Professor Zogg has said that one should have them removed by means of an injection. I am in favour of the surgery, but that is not a judgment that I should like.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend is a formidable advocate. I can only hope that I never have the misfortune to appear before him on the question wh haemorrhoids should be removed in one way o I hasten to add that I do not suffer from that com I trust that I never shall.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend may suffer complaint as a result of speaking for too long.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend says t contract this problem as a result of speaking for However, because of the way in which my right learned Friend the Minister has been shifting a sedentary position, embarrassed by the evide have drawn to the attention of the Hou conclusively puts the mockers on his argument, the first to succumb to that difficulty.

There is evidence of genetic damage. I do n rely upon it as true evidence, nor do I seek to a scaremongering purposes. However, it is rig should refer the House to the studies that h undertaken. Then the House and the people of th can decide whether they believe or reject the evid as Lord Jauncey had the right to make the decisi did.

In 1973, the Russian Research Institute of Health and Occupational Diseases found tha caused genetic damage to a rat. In 1974 the University College of Physicians and Surgeo United States of America found that fluori genetic damage in mice, sheep and cows. In Pomeranian Medical Academy found that fluori genetic damage in humans. In 1979, the Nationa of Dental Research in the USA showed that flu not cause genetic damage in mice. We can b about that. In 1981, the Institute of Botany showed in three studies that fluoride cause damage in rats. In 1982, the University of Kansas City, showed that fluoride caused genet in a mouse, so unfortunately mice come bac league of sufferers. In 1983, the Kunming I Zoology, Kunming, in the People's Republic showed that fluoride causes genetic damage i 1984, the Nippon dental university in Tokyo sh fluoride causes genetic damage in hamsters an cells. Also in 1984 the same university study sh fluoride causes genetic damage in a human cel

I am sure that my right hon. and learned F seek to discredit those studies. He may be s Nobody would be more satisfied than I if h discredit those studies, because they cause concern. If my right hon. and learned Friend is r of discounting those studies and persuading the come round to his view, it would be an act of on his part to allow this Bill to pass into law u

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend was asked w fluoride had on the teeth of a rat. I ought to attention of my hon. Friend to a document t received today, and that he may also have rece Mr. P. Clavell Blount, who I understand is an the subject. He maintains that fluoride is a v poison.

Mr. Best: I was unaware that fluoride is a v poison, so I am now better informed. Howeve evidence I have been given, it appears that tha a natural consequence.

Mr. Michael Brown: This is no joke. May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to an article which appeared two years ago in *The New Scientist*. It was written by Mr. Geoffrey Smith, who is an Australian dentist. He suggested that there is a serious risk of fluoride overdose and that fluoride can be harmful, particularly when one looks at the studies on rats which show that

"blood ionic fluoride levels of 0·2 parts per million cause dental fluorosis, a serious form of damage to developing tooth cells; and rats are between one-seventh and one-tenth less sensitive to fluoride than humans".

Mr. Best: I shall not comment on that point, because I am not medically qualified. However, my hon. Friend will no doubt have an opportunity to advance his argument.

The Japanese report shows in relation to fluoride that

"a potential for carcinogenicity of this chemical, which is widely used by humans, is suggested."

The point is made no more strongly than that and I do not wish to make it any more strongly. However, the concern remains and until that concern is expunged this new clause should form part of the Bill. It would impose a duty upon my right hon. and learned Friend to ensure that the general public were made aware of all these studies and that they were fully debated.

If the Government are so certain of their case, why are they not prepared to debate these matters in full, through the medium of my new clause, which would place a duty upon the Secretary of State to make available all of these studies? No doubt he would pass his own comments upon them. If these studies are disreputable and are not to be believed, is it not right that this fact should be exposed in public rather than that a lurking doubt should be left in the minds of the general public and of hon. Members? That is what will happen if my new clause is not adopted.

An additional study was made by Japanese scientists which shows that fluoride causes DNA damage. It may be that this study can be totally invalidated.

Mr. Fairbairn: What is the definition of DNA?

Mr. Best: If my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me, I shall not go into the question of definitions.

It is possible that this report can be discredited and that no value whatsoever can be attached to it. Why, therefore, should one fear these matters being drawn to the attention of the public in the way that my new clause suggests, with my right hon. and learned Friend making his own comments upon them every 12 months? At least the general public would then be aware of the studies that existed and of the arguments for and against. No right-thinking person could disagree with that proposition. It is right that the matter should be discussed widely in the manner that I suggest rather than left to create lurking fears.

Fluoride accumulates in the human system over a time. That is why no dentist or doctor will say what is a safe dose of fluoride. There is no such thing because fluoride is a poison. One of the problems of the Bill is that people will ingest fluoride for the purposes of mass medication—I know that that is not accepted by some of my hon. Friends—when we do not know the nature, age and physical attributes of the recipient, or the total accumulation in the body of any one recipient.

What kind of medicine is that? We would not know who was getting it or how much they had had before. Fluoride is a poison and is cumulative. Is that what we shall see in Britain in 1985? We still like to pretend that Britain is a free country where people are not mass medicated against their will.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is no evidence that fluoride in significant quantities is contained in water as a natural constituent element. It is picked up by water as it passes through the land. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Handbook:

"Airborn fluorides have caused more world-wide damage to domestic animals than any other air pollutant."

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Best: I must not give way. I have given way a number of times to my hon. Friend and I have delayed the House for long enough. In the interests of brevity, I must not give way to my hon. Friend and I hope that he will understand and will forgive me.

In my constituency I have Anglesey Aluminium, a plant which produces aluminium, as the name suggests. It also produces fluoride as a by-product which comes out of the chimney and is spread around the surrounding land. I make no criticism of Anglesey Aluminium because the level of fluoride is closely and effectively monitored. Close care is taken to safeguard the health of people living nearby. I am satisfied with the way that the fluoride is monitored. But that does not alter the effect that fluoride has on various substances around. In a report entitled "The Effects of Industrial Emissions on the Trees at Penrhos, Holyhead" by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Natural Environment Research Council, it was said:

"The damage recorded to many trees in the vicinity of the works is typical of that caused by emissions of fluoride, similar damage has been reported near several other fluoride sources and aluminium works around the world. It is not unusual for trees to be killed by fluoride in the immediate vicinity of aluminium works."

Of course, we are talking about levels of fluoride far in excess of anything contemplated in the Bill. The level that is contemplated in the Bill of one part per million will not cause death or anything like that. I would be the last person to make any such suggestions. But I mention that because my new clause requires the Secretary of State to make studies available on the damage to plant and animal life. The general public should be aware of the effect of fluoride, if not on themselves, at least on other substances. It does kill plants and trees and it is a poison. That should be well known to everybody before anyone contemplates the artificial fluoridation of water supplies.

6.45 pm

I said that the levels contemplated in the Bill would not cause damage to human beings which led to death. I am satisfied of that, and I hope that I am right. But I have to be careful about what I say because there are studies which show that that is not true. There are studies which show that there may be cancer links. I put it no higher than that. As I said earlier, I do not want to be accused of scaremongering. But is it not right that those studies should be thoroughly discounted before we have a Bill under which fluoride is added to water supplies?

I referred earlier, in answer to an intervention by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), to what is perhaps the greatest problem. In Committee, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said:

"Water authorities know what happened in Annapolis in the United States in November 1979, when it all went wrong. A mistake by a waterworks employee caused the discharge of 1,000 excess gallons of fluoride into the drinking water, increasing its

[Mr. Best]

concentration to 15 times its normal level. As a result, eight patients at a private clinic suffered nausea, vomiting, weakness and a burning sensation in their chests after an hour or so of treatment on their dialysis machines. All were taken off the machines, one patient died and the doctors were at a loss as to what had caused the illness of the dialysis patients. When they learned that a flock of people were going to the hospital suffering from diarrhoea and nausea and that an accident had occurred at the waterworks, one of the local officials said 'We did not want to jeopardise the fluoridation programme'. The authority said that it would never have detected the error of the employee had it not been for the kidney patients on the dialysis machines." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 29 January 1985; c. 17-18.]

I am leaning heavily on the evidence given in Committee on this matter. What answer did my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) give to that serious point about death being caused as a result of a mistake causing more fluoride to be added to the water supply than was intended? He said:

"If we look at the Annapolis accident, where one unfortunate patient died during or after dialysis as a result of an excess of fluoride and an excess of aluminium in his body, we find that the reason was that the operator of the dialysis machine was not following the well-laid-down and well established safety precautions and was using totally untreated water. We in this country give very clear instructions that all water must be treated to screen out undesirable elements for those going through the long-drawn-out business of kidney dialysis." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 5 February 1985; c. 99.]

I am sure that the Government give clear instructions that all water should be treated to screen out undesirable elements such as fluoride. It was accepted by my hon. Friend that it was undesirable and should not be present in water used by renal dialysis patients. I am sure that the Government use every best endeavour. I would be appalled if they did not. Some people can sustain that argument on the basis that we should not worry about the future because there have been no accidents in the past in Britain. I am sure that this is what the peope of Bhopal said and I am sure that that is what the people of Annapolis, where one person died, said.

That is what people in Britain say now. But I do not expect it to be said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health on behalf of the Government, because that would be irresponsible. The House is charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the health of every citizen in the land. If we fail in that sacred duty, we fail in our duty to ourselves and in our duty as Members of Parliament. All that my new clause seeks to do is to try to put that right.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: When I was induced by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have heard one speech on the subject, and a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House want to speak about these important new clauses. By getting to his feet, my right hon. and learned Friend appears to be not prepared to consider further arguments advanced in support of the new clauses. It looks very much as though he is trying to cut off further debate. If he does not want to give that impression, I ask him to sit down so that other hon. Members may make their contributions.

Mr. McGuire: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was asked through the usual channels whether I wished to speak because one or two of my hon. Friends not presently in the Chamber want to speak. I am here and I have listened to the lucid address of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). I said that I wished to speak, but was told that the Minister wanted to intervene. I am disappointed at that. I reinforce the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), that all arguments should be heard before the Government move a closure motion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need to hear any more points because it is not a question that I can answer. It is not unusual for the Minister to rise after a speech—which, after all, has lasted one hour and 50 minutes—to put a point of view that might possibly be helpful to the debate. That does not cut off the debate.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may well be constructive and helpful to the House for my right hon. and learned Friend to put forward his points at this stage. However, it is obvious that other right hon. and hon. Members, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) who has tabled a new clause, wish to speak and, after that, to have a reaction from the Government on the points that they make.

Can you tell the House, Mr. Speaker, whether in the event of my right hon. and learned Friend wishing to catch your eye a second time he would be successful in that endeavour before this matter is put to the vote?

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks the leave of the House to speak a second time, and the House gives him that leave, he may do so.

Mr. Clarke: I have not yet decided whether to seek the leave of the House to intervene a second time because I have only begun to intervene for the first time. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) is almost a debate in himself. Therefore, I am justified in trying to seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, at this time. During my hon. Friend's speech I was twice drawn to my feet and I commented on his impatience to hear my case in response to the new clauses. I now acquit him of impatience and congratulate him on the comprehensive nature of the case that he presented to the House.

In so far as it was relevant and in order, he touched on some of the arguments raised from time to time in various parts of the world about adding fluoride to water. He felt that the opinion of some of the studies was that that would damage most of the parts of our bodies plus those who inherited our genes, would kill our mice, damage our rats, poison our deer and rot our pipes and sewers. Even given the current controversy in some of the alarmist newspaper reports in this country, I am glad that no study has yet suggested that fluoride can give AIDS to anyone. I suspect that if the debate goes on much longer it will be only a matter of time before that is earnestly suggested.

The new clause was moved eloquently by my hon. Friend. New clause 6 would place an obligation on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make provision for the constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom. I can make one general point in response to that which could be made also about the other new clauses. There is nothing between us in principle about the objectives of the new clauses. It is an important part of the Government's case and the case of

those who approve of fluoride that it is a welcome additive to water provided that it is added at the recommended level of about 1 mg per litre.

Fluoride as a substance taken in large quantities or put in water at a significantly higher level than that is, indeed, undesirable and could even be a dangerous substance. It is extremely important that we continue to ensure—as we have ensured for the past 30 years in this country and as has happened, with the exception of one incident, in every other country where this applies—that fluoride is put into the water at safe levels so that it has the desirable effect, which it undoubtedly has, of reducing dental caries in children and, eventually, the general population without jeopardising people's health or even the health of their pets and rodents.

Mr. Best *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

The last time that we debated the matter, and had a brisk debate on the first new clause selected, those hon. Members watching the progress on the television screens accused me of attempting to talk out my own Bill. In my defence, I refer them to *Hansard* and point out that I gave way on that occasion to my hon. Friends about once every 30 seconds. I shall perhaps be a little less generous on this occasion.

Mr. Best: As my right hon. and learned Friend is his usual generous self, I hope that he will not change his view on giving way, as this is a debate. Is he satisfied that there will never be an accident in which more than the recommended amount of fluoride will be added to the water supply? If he is not satisfied, and if there is an accident, what will he do?

Mr. Clarke: It is, of course, important that I am able to satisfy my hon. Friend on the risks of accident. I cannot simply rely on our extremely good record to date. However, I must point out how that record has been achieved and how we believe that it can be maintained without my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State needing an additional statutory power — indeed, an obligation—to undertake constant monitoring.

As my hon. Friend fairly pointed out, the new clause deals with all water in the United Kingdom — both natural water supplies and those where fluoride has been artificially added——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way periodically, but I must be allowed to finish a sentence before doing so.

I begin by dealing with the natural fluoride concentrations in water, which is an important point. All water has fluoride in it; we are talking about the actual level. There are some places, most notably Hartlepool, where the natural level is already at the level to which we propose water authorities should have the power to raise it. All other water has fluoride in it. It is a naturally present ingredient. We are talking about a possible step that could be taken by water authorities to raise the natural level to the level where experience has shown that it has a beneficial effect on the population.

It is right to take a view about natural fluoride concentration. Nowhere in this country is the natural concentration above the recommended level, although that is the case in some other countries. But even the natural fluoride concentrations in this country are periodically monitored by the water undertaker in areas that are not artificially fluoridated. That has never given rise to great problems because the natural fluoride concentrations do not vary significantly throughout the year. There is no need to place the Secretary of State under a duty constantly to monitor the level. Fluoride exists naturally and has never given rise to any health hazard. It is also present in the earth and the air, so the natural ingestion of fluoride is something that none of us can avoid. There is no need to undertake new, continuous monitoring.

Mr. Marlow: It is accepted that in parts of the country there is a level of fluoride naturally in the water supply, but in those areas there are also other impurities such as magnesium and calcium that counteract the effect of fluoride. If we were to put that level of fluoride into water in parts of the country that do not have it at the moment, at the high level that my right hon. and learned Friend is suggesting and without the other trace elements, there might be effects that have not yet been properly monitored.

My right hon. and learned Friend asked why the Secretary of State for Social Services should be responsible for monitoring. As I understand the new clause, it says nothing about the Secretary of State. It is something that could quite properly be done by the Secretary of State for the Environment. If that were the case, perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend would look at it in a slightly different way.

Mr. Clarke: I shall explain what the monitoring is, where it is relevant—which is where the level in the public water supply is raised by water authorities—and why I do not believe that there is any need for additional monitoring.

I do not know who has misled my hon. Friend about magnesium and calcium counteracting the adverse effect of natural fluoride. I do not accept that there is any scientific case to support his assertions. There is absolutely no harm from the natural level of fluoride in the water in Hartlepool. Indeed, it is the good fortune of the population of Hartlepool to have that level of fluoride in their water, and we are seeking to ensure that water authorities in other parts of the country bring the same benefits to their populations.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

7 pm

Mr. Clarke: I will not give way until I have developed my speech.

I come to the question of the monitoring of fluoride in the public water supply. It is important that the level of fluoride, where it is raised in the public water supply, should keep as close as is reasonably practicable to the 1 mg per litre level, and we have arrangements for doing that. Those arrangements will, in practice, be strictly adhered to.

Fluoridation in this country is carried out to guidelines laid down by the Water Quality Advisory Committee. For practical reasons, it is not possible to prevent the concentration varying for most of the time between 0·8 and 1·2 mg per litre. The upper limit imposed by the guidelines of the advisory committee is 1·5 mg per litre. That range is entirely acceptable on health grounds and leaves a wide margin of safety.

[Mr. Clarke]

The guidelines are consistent with the World Health Organisation's recommendations and with the EEC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption. Within those guidelines, the water authorities must take care that the level of fluoride is maintained.

They make sure, therefore, that their staff regularly monitor the water to ensure that it keeps within the guidelines. By the machinery which we use, the fluoride dosing is stopped automatically if it reaches 1·5 mg per litre. The cut-off point is set at less than 1·5 mg per litre in many cases. In a few schemes, regular monitoring is carried out manually and in all cases the fluoride concentrations are continuously recorded by an automatic monitor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn said that that had worked perfectly well in this country. I trust that he has some confidence in the competence and credibility of the water authorities and agrees that their automatic equipment and fail-safe devices should be regarded as adequate.

My hon. Friend prays in aid one incident which took place at Annapolis in 1979. It is no disrespect to him and those who agree with him to say that a feature of all the arguments adduced against putting extra fluoride in water rely on the statements of obscure, bizarre scientists in odd parts of the world, on curious incidents or, as in this case, on one minor incident on which a great mountain of argument is based, most aspects of which, when examined, do not sustain the argument.

An extremely unfortunate incident occurred at Annapolis in 1979 which caused the fluoride level to rise to 20 times the optimal level. That one incident gave rise to the only case of which I am aware in which a person died, and we have equipment which would make it impossible for that to happen here, because we set the cut-off point at one and a half times the optimal level.

In that case, nobody died among the general population of Annapolis. However, there was an unfortunate incident involving a number of dialysis patients, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn pointed out. One of those subsequently died, not from fluorosis but from cardiac arrest, no doubt because of the unpleasant experience he suffered in respect of the fluoride.

The operator of the kidney dialysis plant on that occasion had not been following the advice of the United States public health service and used untreated tap water in the dialysis machines. In Britain we give the same advice—that dialysis should not be carried out with untreated tap water—the main point being to reduce the aluminium, which is far more dangerous for dialysis patients, and the processes used to remove the aluminium have the effect of lowering the amount of fluoride in the water.

Putting all that together, my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn can find, from examining years of experience in every major city throughout the world, only one case—and that was an accident by a water worker —when an individual was killed, and that person died from a heart attack as a result of the unpleasant experience he had had with fluoride. We have equipment in this country to prevent such a massive overdose from occurring. We also have arrangements to ensure that dialysis patients are not exposed to risk in that way. The points that my hon. Friend makes underline the importance of monitoring. The arrangements that we have had for a long time, in Birmingham and elsewhere, would prevent such an occurrence, and those arrangements can continue to be relied on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn made great play with the suggestion that, somehow, we were trying to keep the practice of monitoring away from the public, and he seemed to suggest that the public would not have access to such material so that they could feel sure that monitoring was occurring. I shall demonstrate how he is wrong. Indeed, we seem to be flooding the world with paper on the subject of fluoride. The trouble is that nobody reads it.

It is possible to have access to the monitoring done by water authorities. Water consumer consultative committees may approach water authorities about the results of monitoring; they have the right to have that information from the authorities. Thus, people can check the records of their water authorities in monitoring the level of fluoride added to the water.

New clause 11 seeks to require the Secretary of State — I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that the legislation enables the Government to decide that any Secretary of State may carry out the duty that the new clause would impose—to

"establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and aquatic life

and to report the result of such monitoring to each House of Parliament every 12 months."

I will deal with the general proposition. I believe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn said, that the public are entitled to have all the information from the Secretary of State that they require to be reassured and be up to date with information on the benefits to health and the possible harm that may flow from adding fluoride to water.

We in this country have already carried out fluoridation for nearly 30 years. We introduced it here only after close study by an expert team who visited the United States to assess fluoridation schemes already in progress there. That team published its report in 1953. Since then, we have published a vast amount of information both on the benefits to dental health and the results of inquiries into possible risks to health carried out by, or on behalf of, the Government and various public agencies.

We have always kept the evidence on safety under review, and we shall continue to do so. I do not believe that a new statutory duty and requirement for an annual report would add much to all the work that has been done and will continue to be done in this sphere.

The Government have established a research committee to keep the evidence on safety under review. This was done by contracting general practitioners practising, first, in test areas and by having an analysis of the relevant statistical data by means of investigations carried out on sample sections of the public. Their methods and results were set out in two reports which were published by the Stationery Office and which were entitled: "The conduct of fluoridation studies in the United Kingdom and the

results achieved after five years" and another document of the same type but after 11 years. The conclusion of the second report, issued in 1969, stated:

"'Apart from demonstrating the beneficial effects of fluoridation, the report has confirmed its complete safety. During the 11 years under review, medical practitoners reported only two patients with symptoms which they felt might have been associated with fluoridation. Careful investigation in both cases failed to attribute the symptoms to the drinking of flouridated water."

I shall not delay the House, but I will give some examples of the type of matters that were looked into by the research workers who produced the two reports, which were readily available to the public.

There was a pilot study of urinary fluoride concentration in naturally high-fluoride areas; a pilot survey of consumption of liquids; a dental survey in high-fluoride areas; dental examinations in fluoridated areas; regular inquiries to medical general practitioners in fluoridated areas; scrutiny of vital statistics in high-fluoride areas; specific investigations of the prevalence of osteochondritis juvenalis of the spine, the accumulation of fluoride in bone, the suggested association between malnutrition and dental mottling, the incidence of mongolism, peptic ulcer, and school absenteeism; the size of the thyroid gland in schoolgirls; the incidence of rheumatic disorders in fluoridated areas; and the incidence of osteoperosis in fluoridated areas. I shall not go on, as my hon. Friend did not go on, to burden the House with too much of the detail of his inquiries. I seek to demonstrate the other side of the argument. Government studies have gone into similar obscurities of the kind examined in such detail by my hon. Friend and by other people who have challenged fluoridation.

During the past 30 years a faction of people has sought to establish links between fluoride and various conditions and diseases—some obscure and some not so obscure—and there has been a great deal of research and scientific evidence devoted to knocking all these things down. Every time they are knocked down another idiot idea is raised by a retired dental officer in New Zealand or someone like that and there is considerable trouble taken to challenge that as well.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No, I am not giving way. The debate is not yet balanced in terms of time or argument.

To come up to date, the campaign against fluoride helped a lady in Glasgow — I somewhat unfairly described her the other day as toothless; I discover that the jargon in the medical world is non-dentate—to bring an action against the water authority. Lord Jauncey sat for a year hearing all the evidence of leading experts on both sides. This was all at public expense because the good lady had legal aid. A vast amount of evidence was heard by the Scottish judge. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that a judge is not absolutely the right person always to give an authoritative judgment. I am sure Lord Jauncey had a better opportunity than any of us has had to weigh up the conflicting evidence and come to conclusions. As everyone knows, he came to conclusions on health grounds which were wholly in favour of the policy of putting fluoride in water.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Lord Jauncey was diplomatic in his judgment. Some of the medics who were quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn received rather harsh treatment at the hands of Lord Jauncey when he described what he finally decided was the quality of their work.

Mr. Fairbairn: The people will hardly be reassured if my right hon. and learned Friend, who is not even a judge yet, dismisses scientific research as idiotic because it does not happen to agree with his argument. Surely we are entitled to better than that.

Mr. Clarke: There has been a suggestion that all the pipes will rot. After 30 years no one has discovered any problems with the copper piping in Birmingham or anywhere else. This reference was based on an incident that happened in Seattle of which, so far as we can find out, the American water authorities were completely unaware. My hon. Friend immediately dismissed the American water authorities, which are responsible for the public water supply in America, as being misguided.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to my hon. Friend at some point.

The latest work which the Government commissioned has just been produced—a report by a body of leading epidemiologists chaired by Professor Knox entitled "Fluoridation of Water and Cancer". It is a comprehensive review of the epidemiological evidence which I quoted on Second Reading. Its conclusion is that no link has been established between cancer and the addition of fluoride to the water.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn was fair when he pointed out that he had time to present only one side of the case. But what happens when the Government respond to the constant desire and pressure to give more public information is that those who are convinced that they do not want fluoride in the water do not take the slightest notice of what the Government do. We spent a great deal of time and public money on the work of leading epidemiologists. They produced a study which is available to the public at the price of £6·70 from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. So far I do not think that any opponent has made the slightest reference to it. Indeed, from everything they say it is obvious that none of them has bothered to open its cover. They are prepared to rely, as I said, on a retired dental officer from Auckland——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: —about whom I have heard half a dozen times already, on letters in the "Kilmarnock Bugle" and on obscure evidence of campaigns against fluoride in America.

Mr. Michael Brown: My right hon. and learned Friend has worried me and many of my hon. Friends by the statement that he has just made. In the House of Commons Library I have read in an eminent magazine, *New Scientist*, an article entitled "Fluoridation — Are the Dangers Resolved?" which says:

"Fluoride is now added to drinking water to protect teeth and Australian dentists now suggest that there is a serious risk of overdose."

I expect my right hon. and learned Friend, a Government Minister, to take an article of that kind seriously. I was

[Mr. Michael Brown]

greatly upset to hear that any article that might appear in a magazine of the eminence of *New Scientist* dismissed airily in an arrogant and unreasonable way.

7.15 pm

Mr. Clarke: I confess that I have not read that article. My hon. Friend has probably never read the Knox report. That article appears to use phrases such as "Australian dentists now suggest". Before it is taken seriously, someone should ask for the identity of the Australian dentists and for the basis on which they made the suggestion. Apparently it referred to the dangers of an overdose. Of course there is a danger of overdose; mottling becomes serious when the level of fluoride is twice that recommended and people may be killed if they are given enough fluoride. At 1 mg per litre health authorities not only in this country but in many countries throughout the world are satisfied that it is safe and efficacious.

Mr. McGuire *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: We are monitoring, and we will continue to review the evidence. If my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) says that we should address ourselves to articles in *New Scientist*, we will do so. But when it comes to the suggestion of a new statutory duty, it is plain that we have spared no efforts, no public expense and no pains in reviewing the evidence, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. McGuire *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I do not believe we need an annual report or that we need to start examining the harm to plant and acquatic life, which no one has established anywhere, which is hardly surprising because fluoride is naturally present in the sea at a concentration of about 1 mg per litre. Therefore, I trust that all those who oppose the Bill do not go swimming when they visit the seaside because they will expose themselves to what they regard as a dangerous concentration of fluoride.

Mr. McGuire: I wanted to intervene when the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to other countries. Why does he think that other countries abandoned their schemes? Did they not have the same duty as the right hon. and learned Gentleman? Does he not think that they abandoned their schemes because they had doubts, apart from the principle of mass medication?

Mr. Clarke: The same argument has gone on in most countries where fluoride has been added to the water. I accept that in some countries it has been maintained more vigorously. I well remember meeting the Minister of Health for Ireland who could not understand all the fuss in this country because the Irish Parliament had just passed, with the minimum of opposition, legislation to make fluoridation compulsory. Sweden is the only country of which I am aware that has gone the way the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) suggested. Other countries have arguments about written constitutions that do not apply here but in large parts of the United States, in the Soviet Union and in many other developed countries fluoride is added.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the House that the Royal College of Physicians, the highest medical academic body in the country, studied the matter fully a few years ago and produced a comprehensive report vindicating completely the fluoridation of water to prevent dental decay in children? Why should this House pay less attention to the Royal College of Physicians than to some chap who writes an article in *New Scientist* or an obscure American when the opinions of all those people have been weighed at great length by Lord Jauncey and found wanting?

Mr. Clarke: No royal college or reputable body of medical or dental opinion in this country is against the adding of fluoride to water. I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: Does my right hon. and learned Friend include the British Medical Association as one of those reputable bodies? What is its view?

Mr. Clarke: The BMA is a formidable trade union on behalf of the medical profession. I have not consulted it on its views on fluoride. I have been too busy consulting it with great assiduity on other matters. I refer to the royal colleges and those responsible for medical standards.

New clause 18 provides:

"If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application made under section 1(1)."

I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross, who pointed out to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Ynys Môn the defects in the drafting of the new clause which has already led the Chair to say that it would not be suitable to allow a Division on it.

A helpful note has been passed to me by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibilities for health that the BMA is in favour of fluoridation and has said so. On that basis I am happy to add the BMA to my list of organisations which are in favour of adding fluoride to our water supplies.

New clause 18 would require my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to terminate any application made under the appropriate section. It is clear that my hon. Friend believes that if at any stage in our copious investigations it appears, even in the opinion of unrepentant sinners such as myself, that there is serious doubt about the safety of adding fluoride to water supplies, the fluoride should be withdrawn. Whatever the defects of the new clause, I agree that that should be so.

I do not agree that there is a serious risk that any health authority would defy health evidence of the sort that I have postulated and would continue adding fluoride to the water supply in its area. Following the judgment of the Lord Jauncey, Stranraer, in the Strathclyde region, immediately withdrew fluoride from the water in its area. We would expect water authorities and health authorities to combine to ensure that fluoride was withdrawn the moment that any serious doubt was raised. If there were any hesitation on the part of a health authority, I can assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have the necessary powers to issue a direction. In such circumstances, I am sure that he would issue a directive to ensure that fluoride was withdrawn. That would certainly be done if it appeared that there were certainly doubts about safety.

It is unfortunate that in this instance my hon. Friend and I are dividided on the merits of the issue. However, the Bill is merely proposing that water authorities should be

empowered to add fluoride to their water supplies on the application of health authorities. The issue will be resolved eventually in practice by local authorities consulting public opinion throughout the country. It will not be resolved in this place.

I agree with the arguments and aims behind all of the three new clauses which have been tabled by my hon. Friend. I hope that I have satisfied him that we shall ensure that levels of fluoride are monitored and maintained. Indeed, health authorities will ensure that that happens. They will continue to monitor all the evidence, including that which is beneficial and any claimed adverse effects on health. We would act promptly to ensure that fluoride was withdrawn if ever the evidence changed. I realise that my hon. Friend will not be too satisfied with my reply, but I hope that in the light of the undertakings that I have given he will accept that there is not the greatest division over the details in the Bill between the Government and himself.

Mr. Dobson: It may be helpful or unhelpful if I intervene now. I find myself in the curious position of supporting generally the case advanced by the Minister for Health. It is not my normal relationship——

Mr. Best: Creep! Sycophant!

Mr. Dobson: ——with the Government Front Bench. However, I differ from him in my view of the three new clauses before us. New clause 6 requires the Secretary of State to make provision for the constant monitoring of the levels of fluoride in water supplies throughout the United Kingdom. Given what the right hon. Gentleman does most of the time — for example, attempting to ruin the National Health Service, destroying social services and tearing the social security system to pieces — a new clause that required him personally to go with a plastic bucket to take samples from every river, water course, lake and reservoir would be seen by me as a proposal that would be of benefit to the nation's health. Unfortunately, we do not have that proposition before us.

It is clear from the Minister's explanation that our arrangements for monitoring what goes into water supplies are considerably superior to those that apply in most other parts of the world. That is one of the reasons why the standard of control and cleanliness of our public water supply has been a source of envy to many other countries. I hope that it will continue to be so. It is only recently that citizens of a number of countries have been able, because of an improvement in public water supplies, to stop drinking Perrier water from bottles.

Some of those who wish to see special monitoring of fluoride levels in water seem to forget the myriad of chemicals that are introduced into our water supply. Apparently this is done with the full approval of certain Conservative Members. However, they seek to distinguish between fluoride and other chemicals. I am not aware that anyone has suggested that the amount of chlorine that goes into our water is unsatisfactory. There is no evidence that the arrangements for monitoring the amount of fluoride in water are in any way inferior to the arrangements for monitoring chlorine levels.

Mr. Fairbairn: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will inform the House what are included in the myriad of substances that are added to water. I do not know what "myriad" means, but presumably it involves many substances. Is he so stupid and prejudiced that he cannot see the difference between making water fit to drink by adding chlorine and making it a form of medicine for some, perhaps, and forcing everyone else to drink it? Can he not see the difference?

Mr. Dobson: I was attempting to address myself to the clauses before the House. The hon. and learned Gentleman approves of monitoring of substances that go into water of which he approves, and that principle and the principle of monitoring a substance of which he disapproves are exactly the same. If he cannot recognise that, he is even more stupid than he thinks I am.

Mr. Fairbairn: That would be difficult.

Mr. Dobson: I am a supporter of adding fluoride to our water. I believe that it benefits children by going a long way towards abolishing child toothache. That seems to be a good idea. I speak as someone who suffered from it, and my children have suffered from it from time to time. However, I cannot understand why the Minister is not prepared to accept new clause 11, or something on its lines. If the benefits that have flowed from the introduction of fluoride into Birmingham's water supply had been reiterated year after year in annual reports, that would have helped convince those who have genuine and legitimate doubts about the benefits of fluoride and concern about potential harm from adding fluoride to water supplies. That would have been to the benefit of the truth and that would have been the result if the Government had undertaken regular monitoring. It would be beneficial if the Government would accept new clause 11 or something similar.

I am convinced that the evidence provided by the monitoring will sustain the case that dental health will improve greatly as a result of fluoridation. It will produce no harm to general health and no significant harm to plant and aquatic life. I am convinced that that is so, and if the Minister is equally convinced he should welcome the opportunity to churn out every year a report that will bolster, strengthen and help progress the case for introducing fluoride into the water supply. I hope that the Minister will listen to this argument and to those which will be adduced by the opponents of fluoride. Of course, there is only a small number of Members present who are in favour of putting fluoride into water supplies. Nevertheless, I hope that he will listen to our arguments and come to the conclusion that there is some strength in the proposition that he should accept new clause 11 or something on its lines.

I understand Mr. Speaker's ruling that the drafting of new clause 18 is so far off the mark that it is not worth putting the clause to a vote. I am aware that Conservative Members are strongly in favour of the Government forcing through the privatisation of ancillary staff activity in the NHS. Apparently they support the Government's action in issuing directives and instruments in writing which health authorities cannot ignore. If they accept that they must accept also that instruments instructing health authorities to desist immediately from their involvement in adding fluoride to water supplies, should there ever be evidence that the practice is damaging to the nation's health, should be acted upon by the authorities. It is fairly clear that the Government have powers already to stop fluoride being added to water and that the Secretary of State, should he desire, could implement them.

7.30 pm

Mr. Best: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. He claims that the new clause is defective——

Mr. Dobson: Not I, but the Secretary of State.

Mr. Best: Well, the hon. Gentleman referred to the fact that it might be defective. Clause 1(2) states:

"For the purpose of section (1) above, an application shall remain in force until the health authority, after giving reasonable notice to the statutory water undertaker in writing, withdraw it."

Therefore, the application remains in force. In those circumstances, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand why I drafted a new clause stating that the application should be terminated. After all, the Bill states that the application remains in force.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman should not address that point to me. If he disputes whether the new clause is insufficiently well drafted that it merits being put to the vote, he should raise that matter with Mr. Speaker as it was he who ruled it out on the ground that its drafting was unsatisfactory. I do not know the particular in which it was unsatisfactory, but a further reason for not debating it at length is that it is unnecessary. The Secretary of State has the necessary powers to do what the hon. Gentleman wishes without a change in the law. If hon. Members think about it, they will have to accept that.

The House should not support new clause 6, but it should support new clause 11 or a promise from the Minister that his noble colleagues in the other place will introduce a similar new clause. It appears that we shall not be bothered with a vote on new clause 18.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for supporting new clause 11. As he will see, it is an all-party new clause, and it gains in strength from that. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is a supporter of fluoridation. He always supports it because he knows of no evidence or persuasive arguments to the contrary.

In his brief but otherwise welcome speech the hon. Gentleman referred to harm to aquatic life. I refer him to that part of new clause 11 which deals with that as a harm which results from fluoridation of the water. I wish to bring to his attention, perhaps for the first time, reasonably convincing evidence of the harm that is done to aquatic and plant life, or may be being done. I say that because we are talking about introducing into our waterways and drinking water something which in substantial amounts is known to be a deadly poison. Therefore, any question of doubt about its safety is one which I am sure the hon. Gentleman would wish to see resolved in favour of those who are opposed to it, rather than in favour of those who wish to inflict this poison upon us.

There is a lot of evidence of the effect on plant and aquatic life, but I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to an investigation which was conducted as recently as 1979 by the Quebec Government committee of inquiry. It was set up by the Minister of the Environment for Quebec. This was not a committee of nuts, but a committee of experts. It said:

"The accumulation of fluorides in aquatic plants and fauna is a very important phenomenon because of its potential impact on all animals consuming these organisms. Recent studies suggest that the concentration of fluorides along the food chain is certainly not less than 10 to one. The information available has shown that, at the level of 1.9 parts per million, fluorides lower the rate of growth of the green algae 'Chlorella' which is an important link in the food chain. It is also known that sev aquatic plants can easily accumulate fluorides at levels w exceed by far the level reached by their environment".

It went on to say:

"Fishes and other aquatic species tend to accumulate fluor in their body mainly within the skeleton and the exoskele These accumulations may be very important according different species. Furthermore, in the case of certain organ (for example the crab) this accumulation may be responsibl lowering the rate of growth with a corresponding loss of we and reduction of size of the individual. In other cases, suc the frog, the embryonic development of their eggs is dela when they are submitted to a concentration of 1 part per mil of fluorides. Similar effects are observed when tadpoles (la of the frog) are exposed. For certain species of fish, we observe the noxious effects of fluorides on the eggs expose levels of 1.5 parts per million of fluorides. More specifically eggs of trout do not hatch when they are exposed concentrations of 1.5 parts per million of fluorides".

The committee concluded:

"Although there is a lack of information regarding the ef of the accumulation of fluorides along the food chains, the enough evidence to conclude that the actual presence of fluor above certain levels in the aquatic environment is cau important biological damages to both plant and animal syste

That committee recommended an indefinite morator on the fluoridation of water in the province, and that immediately put in hand.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can that he knows of no evidence. I am sure that he will for me for saying so, but if there were a conflict between I would prefer to accept the evidence of an offi committee of experts, set up by a properly formulated responsible Government, than the opinion of the Gentleman—I hope that he will not be insulted—w he has clearly not advised himself of the conclusion that important report.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. and learned Friend has qu from a report published in 1979. Research was carried in Renfrewshire up to 1983 on plants such as lettuces on the development of seeds and tomato plants. capacity of the seeds to germinate, grow and to proc fruit is depressed if fluoride in the water in parts less one part per million is fed to them.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. and lea Friend, as ever. That is additional information. I did seek to delay the proceedings of the House by referrin all the available information on the subject, but I tho that by citing one responsible and authoritative report would show conclusively that harm may be cause plants and aquatic life, as a result of which it is that m more important for the water to be monitored.

No hon. Member has a higher regard than I have fo advocacy and powers of advocacy of my right hon. learned Friend the Minister of Health. In a gust of laug he sought to brush out of the way many years of con by many people. That is the advocate's art, and those wish to see the advocate's art at its best will come n hear my speech but to hear and read the speech of my hon. and learned Friend.

It is all very well to joke about these matters, bu are not talking about things that do not matter. We talking about things that affect life, pain and sufferi

Mrs. McCurley: Like toothache.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend says, " toothache", and that of course must enter into t considerations. It is not enough to laugh these ma away. It is no joke if people are dying of cancer as a r

of drinking fluoridated water. There is at least one study, the most thorough epidemiological study ever undertaken, which comes to the conclusion that 10,000 people are dying of cancer every year in the United States of America as a result of drinking fluoridated water.

It is not a laughing matter if our children grow up with mottled teeth. Mottled teeth are not only an embarrassment, but are the first signs of dental fluorosis—that is, the dental poisoning that comes from drinking fluoride. The harm that has been done to the development of teeth has been well investigated and set out by a large number of very authoritative dentists, dental surgeons and dental investigators.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to Hartlepool, where there is natural fluoridation in excess of one part per million. The proportion of youngsters there suffering from mottled teeth is very substantial. The evidence shows that one in five of the children who drink Hartlepool's fluoridated water have some degree of mottling of the teeth. That does not seem to me to be a laughing matter.

Mrs. McCurley: Tetracycline.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend has not stopped muttering since the moment I got to my feet. Of course I shall give way to my hon. and beautiful Friend in a moment. I know that she is very much in favour of fluoridation and that she is married to a gentleman who is even more in favour of it. I always listen to what she has to say with great interest and concern, and I shall now sit down and give her an opportunity to articulate more loudly her mutterings of the past five minutes.

Mrs. McCurley: What studies have there been in connection with the lettuces in Hartlepool? If there are obviously lettuces in Renfrewshire which were fed with fluoridated water, have they in any way suffered? I have never heard of anything like that.

Secondly, will my hon. and learned Friend also consider the point that I made previously about antibiotics like tetracycline having an effect on children's teeth? It may be that the doctors in Hartlepool prescribed antibiotics to children at an early age and caused the mottling about which my hon. Friend is talking.

7.45 pm

Mr. Lawrence: Unfortunately, the words, "I have never heard of anything like that," do not mean that such a thing has not been said or that such work is not being carried out. However, it would not surprise me if the work had not yet been carried out, because the medical and scientific people who carry out this kind of work have probably not yet got around to Hartlepool's lettuce. When I was on the Select Committee on Social Services—one of the most distinguished members of which, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), is listening avidly to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench—we looked into preventative medicine. We received a submission from a lecturer from Liverpool, Mr. Tolley, who warned us that the work he was doing on the effect of fluoride on watercress led him to the conclusion, which he wanted to share with the Committee at the earliest possible moment, that the accumulation of fluorides in watercress indicated a very high level of danger indeed to the food chain. It may be that that was Liverpool's watercress, and it may be that that gentleman and others will soon get round to Hartlepool's lettuce.

I wish merely to rely upon the much more all-embracing conclusions of the Quebec departmental committee to make the point—and I do not want to spend too long on plant and aquatic life—that there is a very real danger to plant and aquatic life from fluoridated water.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps I could take my hon. and learned Friend off plant and aquatic life, which is important to the food chain and, thus, to human beings, and bring us back to human beings. My right hon. and learned Friend said that there had been fluoride in the water for some 30 years and that there was no evidence that this had caused any damage to human health. My right hon. and learned Friend is the Minister for Health, and as such he is responsible for the drugs issued to humans. He will know, and my hon. and learned Friend will know, that before a drug goes on the market it is subjected to an exhaustive process lasting many years before being validated for human consumption. Even when that has been done——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is developing into a speech. Will he be brief, please?

Mr. Marlow: I am just coming to the burden, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that my hon. and learned Friend is aware of what I am going to say.

Ten, 11 or 12 years after that scrutiny, we discover that there is something badly wrong with those drugs which have been allowed and have been consumed for a considerable period of time. Drugs have to be taken only if a person has something wrong with him. Water is something that we must all drink. Is it not much more dangerous that we are doing something with the water supply and we do not really know what the outcome will be?

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting far more felicitously than I could a point which I had intended to make later in my speech. Now I do not have to make it.

My hon. Friend touched on something which reminded me that I had not properly dealt with the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). She asked me about tetracyclines. It may be that antibiotics helped to cause the mottled effect on the teeth—we do not know—but if the mottled effect is caused, whether by tetracyclines or by any other antibiotics, as a result of drinking fluoridated water, does that not make the case of those of us who are opposed to it that much stronger, because there is not just the effect of fluoride but the effect of tetracyclines, which are widely used throughout the country?

If people were to think that any danger, or even discolouration of their teeth which they do not believe will lead to danger, was the result of antibiotics plus water fluoridated at one part per million, the public would not want it. That is why many people feel strongly that the kind of intervention which my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde made is not very helpful to her cause.

I come back to the point which I was making before those interventions, about the joking approach of my right hon. and learned Friend. People dying of cancer have nothing to joke about. People with mottled teeth have

[Mr. Lawrence]

nothing to joke about. People who have kidney diseases which may be adversely affected by drinking fluoridated water would not find it funny. People with allergies would not find it funny. There is a list of very distinguished scientists throughout the world who have documented the allergic effects on some individuals of fluoridated water at one part per million. Diabetics who may be affected by drinking fluoridated water would not think it very funny. Those with thyroid abnormalities who might be affected by drinking fluoridated water would not consider it a laughing matter. Women who are on the pill who might be adversely affected by drinking fluoridated water would not think it a joke, any more than arthritics who may be harmed by drinking it would think it one.

Despite all the miracles of modern science, we still do not know why children die in cot deaths within the first year of their birth. I am not saying that I have any evidence on that subject, but in a moment I shall show how the fluoridation of water could possibly affect children in the first year of life. Furthermore, pregnant women who might be adversely affected by drinking fluoridated water, and people with heart disease, would not think the matter very funny. I do not suppose that there are many Conservative Members who think that the loss of individual freedom that is involved in fluoridation is a laughing matter.

Thus, although we were greatly amused by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, and although it was a great feat of advocacy to laugh our opposition out, on cool reflection the joke will not be found to be funny by many people who may be adversely affected by drinking such water. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) asked my right hon. and learned Friend why so many countries had given up fluoride if this was such a hilariously funny matter and if it was possible to blow out of the way the evidence of tens of scientists around the world who have studied the evil effects of fluoridation.

I am afraid that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has been imperfectly briefed once again. He said that Sweden was the only country that had given up fluoride. I hope that he will not mind if I draw his attention to the position in other countries. An investigation that took place in November 1978 was told that Austria would not carry out fluoridation——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When remarks are being addressed directly to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, should he not do the House the courtesy of returning to the Front Bench and listening to what is being said? I am sure that the debate will go on for much longer, because there is much evidence to be advanced, but if he were present now, at the end of it he would at least be in a position to give some answers instead of merely making jokes in response to the extremely cogent case being advanced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that the Minister has responded by returning to his place.

Mr. Lawrence: I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for returning. I did not think that he was doing me any discourtesy. As he is convinced that there is no evidence that fluoridation is bad and that people want it in their water supplies, it must be difficult for him to hear the harsh truths that we are try to put his way. It is perhaps more than the human fra can stand to hear me pushing harsh truths in his directi

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It seems to be thought that I somehow left the House during the speech of my hon. learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrenc but I was six in from the end of the Front Ben consulting those in the Box who advise me. I assure hon. and learned Friend that his voice is penetrating that his advocacy is clear, and I was following his poi with the closest interest, without the assistance of my h Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

Mr. Lawrence: I am extremely grateful to my ri hon. and learned Friend. I hope that he will not be insul when I say that I had rather hoped he was telling off civil servants who have obviously briefed him inadequately about the responses of other countries. I sh tell him what the responses were to a very thorou inquiry. Countries were asked what the fluoridati situation was. Austria said that there was no fluoridati and that it would not be carried out. Belgium said t there was no fluoridation and that one small fluoridati plant had now been discontinued. Chile said that it had fluoridation. It was fluoridated in 1953, but discontinu it in 1977, after 24 years, as the result of a professo work, which showed that it was harmful.

Denmark said that it had no fluoridation and that it w forbidden by law in food and water. Egypt said that th was no fluoridation and that American pressure fluoridate had been rejected. Finland said that there h been one small experimental plant since 1959, involvi only 1·5 per cent. of the total population. Twenty ye later no further plant had been installed. France had fluoridation and said that the Government did not all fluoridation as safety had not been sufficiently proved.

Portugal had one small experimental plant still operation. I have already read out the report of t province of Quebec. Scientists visiting Russia report evidence of artificial fluoridation there. After 33 years experimenting on people, less than 40 per cent. of t American populating are fluoridated and hundreds of citi are giving up fluoridation.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. and learned Friend t Minister was disagreeing with my hon. and learned Frie about the Soviet Union, and seemed to be praying it in a as if it had fluoridation.

Mr. Lawrence: I want to try to keep my rema within reasonable bounds, and have been tempted to into the matter in detail only because I know that my rig hon. and learned Friend the Minister would want me give chapter and verse in reply to something that w perhaps said in jest — it shows the danger of sayi something in jest—about Sweden being the only coun to give up fluoride. Sweden is not the only country to gi up fluoride. In Australia, compulsory fluoridati legislation Acts have been passed in the states of Victor Western Australia and Tasmania. The decision artificia to fluoridate in other states is made by local authoritie

About 10 per cent. of Great Britain is artificia fluoridated. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minis keeps talking about the proportion of Britain that naturally fluoridated, but fewer than 500,000 people this country drink naturally fluoridated water. The avera

level of fluoride in the water is so low that to top it up to one part per million would require a tenfold increase in the amount of fluoride. So when my right hon. and learned Friend refers lightly to "just topping up", as if we were just putting a little cream on top of the milk without anyone noticing, it should be borne in mind that we are talking about a tenfold increase in areas where there is natural fluoridation.

West Germany has no fluoridation. It was discontinued in 1971, after 18 years of continuous use, for "health and legal considerations." Greece has no fluoridation and no programmes have ever been introduced. In Holland there is no fluoridation, as it was discontinued in 1976 after 23 years of experiments involving 9,800,000 people. By royal decree, all permissions to fluoridate were cancelled. India and Italy have no fluoridation. Japan has no fluoridation, and the Government do not favour or encourage it. In Luxembourg there is no fluoridation and it is said:

"The method is a naive utopia without practical effect".

Norway has no fluoridation, and legislation designed to make fluoridation compulsory was rejected by the Norwegian Parliament in 1975. Sweden has no fluoridation and it is forbidden by law. It was discontinued in 1969 after 10 years of artificial fluoridation. The World Health Organisation was asked by the Swedish Medical Board to produce evidence to support the WHO's claim that fluoridation was safe. No evidence was ever produced, and Parliament declared fluoridation illegal on 18 November 1971.

Switzerland has had one experimental city since 1959, involving only 4 per cent. of the total population. In December 1975 the health department of Basle advised the Baselstadt city council to stop fluoridation because of its ineffectiveness.

I do not know how a Minister, who proposes both fluoridation and to allow water authorities to force the population by mass medication to drink fluoridated water, and who is faced with the evidence that practically every other country in western Europe except Eire does not have it, does not want it or has rejected it, can come to the Dispatch Box and say that only Sweden is opposed to fluoridation.

Mr. Marlow: It is mind-boggling.

8 pm

Mr. Lawrence: If that is the level of intelligence that informs my right hon. and learned Friend, who has great abilities, the mind must tremble in fear at the prospect of a Government who feel that all my evidence is of no interest, no avail and no purport.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I named Sweden, and having listened to my hon. and learned Friend, I believe that that is still the case. Sweden is the only place where a parliamentary vote has reversed a fluoridation scheme which had previously been enacted. In one or two other countries there have been doubts about the constitutional grounds. There are 40 countries in five different continents where fluoridation is practised. As my approach to the debate is a little more succinct than that of my hon. and learned Friend, I hope that he will forgive me if I do not name them all.

Mr. Lawrence: I am afraid that I must beg to doubt that. Although I have not covered all the countries of the globe, I have covered all countries in western Europe. There is no evidence from the countries that I have listed that they are grabbing at fluoridation as fast as they can for its beneficial and safe effects.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me if I do not stay, because I have to leave to address a meeting about fluoridation. Has the Council of Europe ever been asked to pronounce on the matter? If not, as he knows, the House is represented on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, it might be useful to see whether it supports the rather strange argument that mass medication should be imposed on a democracy. Will my hon. and learned Friend think of suggesting to our representatives on the health committee of the Council of Europe that the subject should be investigated?

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who, until recently, was a Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security, and has also served at the Department of the Environment. It is clear from his intervention that he has considerable doubts whether it is good sense to fluoridate our water. It is encouraging to know that men of his experience have those doubts, and it is discouraging to me that he is no longer able to influence the Government in making a decision. He is welcome as a supporter of all hon. Members who oppose fluoridation. Is my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) aspiring to become a Minister?

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has just said that there are 40 countries in which fluoridation takes place. Would it be in order for my hon. and learned Friend to ask our right hon. and learned Friend to do the House the honour of attaching the names of those countries to the *Official Report* so that we can have that information?

Mr. Lawrence: Those who read the *Official Report* tomorrow will see listed the countries that I mentioned, and perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will respond to my hon. Friend's invitation.

My right hon. and learned Friend sought to pour scorn on hon. Members who are in favour of the new clauses, which merely provide for monitoring so that the British people can be reassured that there is not too high a proportion of this poison entering their water supplies. That does not seem to be a bizarre request. I shall deal with two points that he raised.

My right hon. and learned Friend berated us for not referring to the Knox report. He said that it looked as though the Knox report had not even been opened. That was a trifle patronising, because some people have spent a long time trying to read it, to see what light it throws on these matters. My right hon. and learned Friend will not wish to make an unfair point. The Knox report was published on 31 December 1984, and therefore has been available only for the past four weeks. Scientists take longer than four weeks to come to sensible and properly worked out conclusions. However, we have already received some preliminary conclusions.

I have received an open letter from Dean Burk, who is the leading anti-fluoridationist of the Western world. He has been much maligned by those who have not bothered to find out his antecedents. For 35 years that now elderly and highly respected gentleman was the chief cyto-chemist

[Mr. Lawrence]

for the National Cancer Institute of America. When someone with that amount of experience and knowledge about fluoride and cancer produces a report, it must be listened to. He and Mr. John Yiamouyiannis were responsible for the report, which was first produced in 1975, and was given to the Royal College of Physicians to analyse. The college did not do so before it reported in February 1976.

Since then, the report has been constantly under attack from pro-fluoridationists throughout the world. Nevertheless, the 10 largest American cities where there was fluoridation were analysed for cancer deaths, as were the 10 largest American cities without fluoridation. The two men did what no one else seems to have done in epidemiological studies—that is, they investigated the position before fluoridation. Often the flaw in the fluoridation argument is that, because something has happened since fluoridation, it must have happened because of fluoridation, and that because there has been an improvement, it must be because of fluoridation. Frequently, the position before fluoridation is not considered.

Burk and Yiamouyiannis decided that, although there was a gradual increase, as one would expect, in the 20 largest American cities—for 18 years they studied the fluoridation effects, and for five years they studied the cities when neither group of cities had artificial fluoridation — the cancer death rate was roughly comparable. In the 18 years after fluoridation, the cancer death rate in the fluoridated cities rose significantly. They conclude that it costs 10,000 lives of American citizens a year.

That report has been attacked. When Burk and Yiamouyiannis tried to answer the attack, the ostriches buried their heads in the sand. During an Adjournment debate I warned the Minister that I was about to tell him how the survey had been weighted for age, race and sex and not to reply by saying that that was not the case. I made my speech and the Minister said that the trouble with the survey was that it had not been weighted for age, race and sex. That is what his adviser wrote into his speech. It took a long time before the Department of Health and Social Security admitted that the figures had been weighted for age, race and sex. They are again examined by the Knox report, and I can say only that the argument is about how to standardise mortality death ratios. One group does it one way, and the other group does it another, and each believes that its method is correct. If we sweep that away and say, "A plague on both your houses; never mind how you examine the standardised mortality ratios, just consider the broad figures," we discover, whichever way one looks at it, a substantial increase in cancer deaths in the 10 American cities that have been fluoridated during those 18 years.

Let me read from the open letter that comments upon the Knox report — we were taken to task for not referring to it, so I feel emboldened to refer to it now—from Dean Burk dated 10 February 1985:

"With or without standardising adjustments for the factors age, sex, and race, there is a large increase in the cancer death rate trends in the ten largest fluoridated American central cities compared to an equivalent, matched ten cities that were not fluoridated. The increase amounted to 31·5 excess cancer deaths per 100,000 population over the period of 1950 to 1970 in the unadjusted data, and after standardisation adjustment by conventional methods, the adjusted excess still amounted to large value of 21·8 cancer deaths per 100,000 population the period of 1950 to 1970. In short, standardising adjustm for age, sex, and race reduced the observed cancer death trends by only 30·8 (not 100) per cent., leaving 69·2 per c thereof ascribable to artificial fluoridation clearly harmfu human health in terms of increased cancer mortality alone."

If all the critics of our system of assessing mortality r are right, we should sweep the figures away and sim talk about the bald facts, which show that there has b a significant increase in cancer deaths in the fluorida American cities.

The evidence is not limited to that, because we h examples in England. Birmingham has been fluorida since 1964, and it has experienced a substantial incre in cancer deaths. Compared with Manchester, where cancer death rate was roughly the same as that Birmingham, before fluoridation there has been 8·2-fold increase in the cancer deaths in Birmingh compared with a 1·5-fold increase in cancer deaths Manchester during the same period.

Those who say that fluoridation is perfectly safe that the evidence is a load of rubbish. But the bald figu show, however one weights them, an excess of can deaths in fluoridated Birmingham compared with n fluoridated Manchester.

I do not know who is right, and I have never tried decide who is right. I merely say that if leading men integrity, science and eminence have two conflict views on the safety of fluoridation, why do Government side with those who arrogantly deny, in face of all the evidence, that there is evidence to contrary? If there is doubt among leading antagonists both sides, the British public must be entitled not to h the doubt resolved by forcing this stuff into their mou every time they drink water.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I trust that my hon. and learn Friend does not wish to cause needless alarm Birmingham. The Government did not side with eit group about cancer rates in Birmingham. We co missioned a comprehensive study by epidemiologis which is the Knox report to which I referred. My hon. a learned Friend has done his homework thoroughly, so will have read chapter 7 of the report, which concentra on Birmingham and Anglesey. The conclusion, af weighing up all the evidence, is as follows:

"The examination of cancer rates for up to fourteen years af fluoridation in Birmingham, and up to eighteen years af fluoridation in Anglesey, and the investigation of cancer rates areas with various levels of naturally occurring fluoride, prov substantial reassurance concerning the safety of fluoridation respect of cancer. All statements to the contrary were based errors."

Those errors are carefully analysed in the report.

8.15 pm

Mr. Lawrence: I shall deal with those errors in moment, but I wish to read to the House Dr. Burk conclusion about Birmimgham. He said:

"Upon fluoridation of the Birmingham public water supply October, 1964, its population of approximately one milli showed one of the most abrupt documentable increases observed cancer death rate of any large city in the world— greater than reported for any non-fluoridated English city s as Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol, Manchester, Coventry, Bradfo Sheffield, Greater London, etc., or for any of 20 previou studied large American cities whether fluoridated or not."

The errors to which my right hon. and learned Frie alluded were the failure to weight age, race and sex. T

proposition is simple. If one takes an older population, there is obviously a higher tendency for them to die of cancer. Therefore, age is a factor that must be weighted into the figures. Race must also be weighted into the figures, say some people, because, for one reason or another, since black people tend to concentrate in urban areas, whether there is a higher proportion of blacks in an area is a significant factor. I do not follow that argument, and experts doubt whether that is a reasonable criticism. However, it is one that is made. As for sex, if an area has a higher proportion of women, who are less prone to cancer, that is another distorting feature that must be taken into account.

All that I can say is that Burk and Yiamouyiannis and others have taken into account age, race and sex and have been criticised for so doing. Therefore, they have said, "Do not take those factors into account. Examine the bald statistics, which show a substantial increase in the cancer death rate in Birmingham." My right hon. and learned Friend and the people who wrote his report may not like it. I do not know whether Burk and Yiamouyiannis or the people who wrote my right hon. and learned Friend's report are right. But if distinguished and eminent men who have made a lifetime study of this subject are divided about the results, there must be a doubt about it. That doubt should be resolved in favour of the British people. It should not be resolved in favour of dentists, doctors or scientists, who believe that the mass medication of the water supply will lead to Utopia.

Mr. Best *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I would like to get on, because I can see the gathering of the crowd. I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, who has not had the courage to listen to much of what I have said so far, that the Government have given us this prime time to debate the matter more fully and at a time when the press can report the proceedings, so that more people outside the House can be made aware that this is not just a matter of whether there should be freedom. It is also a health and safety matter. I am grateful to those who arranged the business for allowing us this opportunity, but it is slightly soured by the fact that, although it is supposed to be a free vote on the Conservative side, I notice that we have had a two-line Whip since 3.30 pm. That means that everyone must be here and that everyone who wishes to toe the Government line will soon go into the Lobby when no doubt a closure motion will be moved.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend talked about doubt. Does he accept that there was no doubt in the minds of hon. Members who signed early-day motion 65 on 25 February 1982, which referred to the West Midlands regional health authority, to which there was an amendment signed by 23 hon. Members? It stated:

> "The decision of the unelected West Midlands Regional Health Authority to mass-medicate 2,000,000 people under its control by adding an industrial effluent containing the toxic chemical fluoride to the public drinking water"

should be deplored when,

> "(a) to do so is expressly against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of elected local authorities in the region which have voted on the issue; (b) the legality of such decisions is being tested before a Scottish Court; (c) it involves a flagrant violation of the individual's freedom to choose whether he wishes this medical treatment or not"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has spoken at great length. I hope that he is not seeking to make another speech. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Best: The early-day motion refers to other issues expressed by those hon. Members who signed that motion, among whom are two Ministers, whom I shall not name, and two Parliamentary Private Secretaries. Perhaps their views have substantially changed. I welcome a change of view, but that fact remains.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not wish to be unkind to my Government. I do not want to rub salt in the wounds of any of my hon. Friends who have, as a matter of principle, been against fluoridation, but not just their knowledge but their principles have changed. I realise that substantial pressures are placed upon those who seek to hold two principles. I regret that, but it is a fact of life.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: It appears that the Minister for Health was being extremely selective in the report that he held to be of importance. He seemed to dismiss Dean Burk with a joke and an aside, yet he is prepared to quote from the recent Knox report which many people have not yet had the opportunity to study in depth. Is it not extraordinary that the DHSS, which is supposedly in favour of the nation's good health, is prepared lightly to dismiss the eminent reports to which my hon. and learned Friend has referred?

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but it is worse than that. It is not just a question of Burk and Yiamouyiannis and other eminent people, but a large number of eminent scientists believe that this stuff is unsafe, is evil and should not be put into our water. I shall give the House a list of names. Professor Butenandt, a chemist from Munich university—a Nobel prize winner; Professor Murphy, a consultant physiologist — also a Nobel prize winner; Professor Semenov, a chemist at Leningrad university — another Nobel prize winner; Professor Louis Steyn, a professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Victoria university; Professor Albert Shatz, a co-discoverer of streptomycin; Professor Burgstable of the University of Kansas; Dr. James Ebert, vice-president of the United States National Academy of Sciences; Dr. Philip Sutton, former senior lecturer in dental science at Melbourne university.

In the United Kingdom I list Dr. Paul McCormick, research fellow at Nuffield college, Oxford; Dr. R. A. Helman, senior lecturer in bacteriology at Barnet hospital; G. J. Roberts, a lecturer in children's dentistry at the Royal dental hospital, London; Dr. C. W. M. Wilson, consultant physician in geriatric medicine at the Royal hospital, Lanarkshire and the department of physiology at Strathclyde; Dr. John Enslie, a lecturer in chemistry at King's college, London; Dr. Paul Wix, of the south bank polytechnic.

They are just some of the distinguished and eminent scientists who have said that this stuff should not go into our water. That is how selective my right hon. and learned Friend is. One can pour scorn on the odd individual, but a catalogue of Nobel prize winners and men of distinction in all the spheres covered by fluoridation say, "Don't touch it. The stuff is bad. It will poison society." To pretend that their views are not important is preposterous and I find it

[Mr. Lawrence]

difficult to understand how any Government, let alone my Government who purport to believe in freedom for the individual, can pretend that.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. and learned Friend appreciate that according to the Minister the people that he has just named are idiots. He told us that they were. We are about to vote on the closure on a matter of importance so that those who have jobs can get rid of their consciences. I am whipped by a vice-chairman of the Scottish Pure Water Association. How is that for freedom of conscience?

Mr. Lawrence: Once again, I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend.

I was talking about the cavalier brushing aside of experienced and expert people on the anti-fluoridation side of the argument. The Minister could not understand how we can still be opposed to fluoridation. A court in Scotland under the eminent and careful custody of Lord Jauncey concluded, after a long consideration, that fluoridation was utterly safe and that there was no evidence that it was unsafe. He concluded that it was absolutely beneficial to teeth — I have not begun that argument yet. Lord Jauncey, with all his eminence and wise judgment, made the judgment of only one man. One man, however eminent, can be wrong.

Against Lord Jauncey I set the conclusions of three courts of law in the United States recently. They all heard the same evidence from the same witnesses, but they came to different conclusions.

In Philadelphia fluoridation and its safety was considered at great length with a massive amount of evidence from the same people who appeared before Lord Jauncey's court. Judge Flaherty said:

"This court is compellingly convinced of the evidence in favour of the plaintiffs."

The plaintiffs were the people who wanted to stop the fluoridation of water in Philadelphia. They went to the court with their scientists and their doctors. The pro-fluoridationists took along their doctors and scientists and the judge said that he was

"compellingly convinced of the evidence in favour of the plaintiffs."

That is one-all between Lord Jauncey and Judge Flaherty.

In February 1982 the case was heard again at Houston in Texas. The judge said:

"Artificial fluoridation of public water supplies may cause or may contribute to the cause of cancer, genetic damage, intolerant reactions and chronic toxicity, including dental mottling in man . . . and may aggravate malnutrition and existing illnesses in man."

A third judge in the Illinois case in February 1982 concluded:

"The artificial addition of fluoride to the public water supply may have adverse health effects . . . It exposes the public to a risk, uncertain in its scope, of unhealthy side effects."

Three American judges came to those conclusions. They heard the same witnesses as Lord Jauncey, but they came to different conclusions.

If men of good will and, integrity with the ability to analyse the statistical, scientific and medical data come to different opinions about the safety of fluoride, surely there must be a doubt about its safety. That doubt should not be resolved against the public who do not want the stuff force-fed through their mouths via the drinking water from their taps.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. and
Friend for giving way. I know that he wants to
a rapid conclusion. My hon. and learned Friend is
this matter in the wrong way. We know that there
sides to this argument, and, in that case, the
should go against fluoridation. That is
Government's problem. As my hon. and learne
knows, at this stage of a party's period in office i
are not what they were, institutions are taking
Government are in the hands of a machine and
Service has discovered that it has a problem. T
been this wretched court case in Scotland and this
woman. The Government have decided that some
to be done about the problem. They have th
report——

8.30 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions sh
brief.

Mr. Marlow: I am coming to the point, Mr.
Speaker.

The Government have said to my right hon. and
Friend the Minister, "Off you go. Here is the rep
the Bill through. This is the Government's duty."
the hook that my hon. and learned Friend the Me
Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has to get our right h
learned Friend the Minister off. That is the way
the problem

Mr. Lawrence: There is only one way in w
solve the problem, and that is for the Govern
withdraw the Bill. That action would ha
overwhelming support not only of the people b
think——

Mr. John Cope (Northavon) *rose in his pla*
claimed to move, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered):* On a
order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think we ha
speech from an Opposition Back Bencher. I do n
that an alliance member has spoken. Is this not
early time for the Government to call for closure

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Whether a closure
should be accepted is entirely a matter for the Ch
not debatable or open to challenge.

Mr. Fairbairn *(seated and covered):* On a
order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any preceden
history of Parliament for a closure motion to be m
a debate on any Bill which has a free vote?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. and
Member is not expecting me to rake my memory to
that point. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Lawrence *(seated and covered):* On a
order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it possible to find so
to give the Government the opportunity to re
whether they want to give the rest of the cou
impression that they are trying to stifle debate
important matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter
Chair.

The House having divided: Ayes 162, Noes 6

Division No. 126] **[8.31 pm**

AYES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashton, Joe
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Gummer, John Selwyn
Harvey, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
John, Brynmor
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Best, Keith
Bidwell, Sydney
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Galley, Roy
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Haynes, Frank
Hickmet, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Proctor, K. Harvey
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Winterton and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to put the Question immediately after the closure, without any interruption.

Question put accordingly, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Cocks *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would be the last to interfere with the Government in obtaining their business, but I should like your guidance as to when it would be appropriate to ask the Lord Privy Seal, who is by fortunate chance with us, whether he would like to make a statement about the premature closure motion on a group of three substantial new clauses when only a handful of Members have had the opportunity to give their views to the House. Is it in any way related to the recent articles that have appeared in *The Times* on his anxiety about the late sittings of the House? At what stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you think it would be appropriate to ask the Lord Privy Seal to give the House the benefit of his views on whether the almost precipitate closure of discussion on this important clause is related to his windiness about Government business proceeding after midnight?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman will recognise that no one is more sensitive than perhaps the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

occupant of the Chair to the times of the rising of the House, but the arrangement of business is not a matter for the Chair. The right hon. Gentleman's question about whether the closure motion was premature is a matter entirely for the Chair. I have exercised my judgment and it is not open to challenge or debate.

Mr. Cocks *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is the most appropriate time to ask the Lord Privy Seal to make a statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Doubtless the Lord Privy Seal, who the right hon. Member said was in the House, has heard what has been said.

The House having divided: Ayes 76, Noes 148.

Division No. 127] **[8.43 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Best, Keith
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clay, Robert
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hickmet, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
John, Brynmor
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paisley, Rev Ian
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Proctor, K. Harvey
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Nicholas Winterton.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Caborn, Richard
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
George, Bruce
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

New Clause 11

MONITORING

'The Secretary of State shall establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and aquatic life.

and to report the result of such monitoring to each House of Parliament every 12 months.'.—*[Mr. Lawrence.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 81, Noes 145.

Division No. 128] **[8.54 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carttiss, Michael
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Galley, Roy
George, Bruce
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hickmet, Richard
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
John, Brynmor
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter
Proctor, K. Harvey
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ivan Lawrence and
Mr. Tony Marlow.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gourlay, Harry
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harvey, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mariand, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Donald Thompson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may recollect that last Wednesday the Leader of the House stifled a debate that we were due to have by making a change in the timetable, which not only created a most unfortunate precedent but ensured that it was utterly impossible for the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill to have a Report stage. Earlier the Government had been embarrassed by the fact that they were utterly unable to muster enough of their payroll vote even to terminate a debate on the Adjournment.

This evening we have had what I regard as an incredible situation where, after only four speeches, including that of the Minister, who spoke for 33 minutes, the closure was moved on an issue that had already proved so contentious and embarrassing to the Government that they had been forced to take it off in the hours after midnight last week and bring it back today. I accept that a Conservative Member spoke for nearly two hours, but that is not the responsibility of Labour Members, who have a right to participate in the debate as well. The Minister's speech lasted the average length of those of all other hon. Members, so if they are accused of filibustering, the Minister must stand equally indicted.

May I have your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the fact that there has been yet another attempt to muzzle the House on a debate which itself involves an important issue of freedom and which itself hands to non-elected

[Mr. Alan Williams]

organisations decision-making powers that many hon. Members feel deeply should be preserved for elected representatives, be they local or national?

How can we deal with a position where twice now, within six days, the Leader of the House has abandoned his duty to protect the House and to protect Back Benchers? Who on earth now is able to protect Back Benchers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said, but the only point that he has raised for my consideration is whether the House should have voted on a closure motion. I repeat that the question whether the House should have a closure motion put to it is entirely a matter for the Chair and is not open to debate or challenge. I made my judgment, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not challenging it.

Mr. Williams: I am not challenging your judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in accepting the closure, which I can well understand. Since the debate lasted more than two hours, on the basis of precedent you were justified in accepting the closure motion. I am questioning and challenging the judgment of the Leader of the House. On an issue of profound importance and deep concern to the House he so misread the feeling of the House that he moved the closure motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair accepts no responsibility whatever for the judgment of any Minister, including the Leader of the House. Let me correct one point that the hon. Gentleman made. It is not a convention of the House that two hours should elapse before a closure motion is acceptable. It is entirely a matter for judgment in the particular circumstances. While there are sides to the House, there are also sides to the question, and the Chair must consider whether the sides to the question have been adequately reflected in the debate.

Mr. Michael Brown: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without in any way wanting or seeking to challenge your decision to accept the closure motion, which I acknowledge is not debatable and is a matter for the Chair, during the previous debate my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister sought to intervene after only one speech with the result that we were asked to vote when the question——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Once again, despite what the hon. Gentleman said in his opening remarks, he is challenging the judgment of the Chair. It is for the Chair to decide which right hon. and hon. Member should catch his eye. It is not unusual for Ministers, to help the House to make progress or to advise the House, to speak early on in a debate on Report or in Committee.

Mr. Brown: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was not a point of order.

Mr. Brown: I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will indicate at the beginning of the next debate when he intends to speak so that we may at least have the benefit of the Minister's——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat that the hon. Gentleman should know by now that it is a matter for the judgment of the Chair which hon. Member—whether Minister or not—should catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you advise those in the Chamber who may still be interested in the concept of free speech on a free vote how that is to be secured when, in the middle of a speech, the closure motion was moved by a whipped Government—and, indeed, a whipped party? I imagine that it is important that the motion on the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order, which can be debated for one and a half hours, is soon reached. That was the psuedo basis upon which the Government Benches were whipped at 3.30 pm this afternoon. I am sure that it is a very important matter.

Now that the Whips have ensured that their dragoons can go and have a decent dinner and come back to stop free speech again, when they choose to do so, on an issue of principle, perhaps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can tell us who can protect free speech on a free vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman is indulging in criticism of the Chair. I must again point out that it is a matter for the Chair, and the Chair alone, to decide whether a closure motion should be accepted and divided upon at an appropriate moment during a debate. The debate had gone on for three and a half hours.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Referring to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), is it true that there appears to be an order from the Tory hierarchy to curtail the debate and put hon. Members and the occupant of the Chair in an invidious position——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair has no responsibility for Tory, or any other, hierarchy. These bogus points of order are only delaying progress.

Mr. Meadowcroft: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should value your advice on the order of future debates. Many hon. Members who wish to participate in a later debate are concerned whether the Government can carry through their business this evening. On Tuesday, we had the farce of a closure motion being carried only by Opposition votes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not know which Tuesday the hon. Gentleman is referring to, but if he is anxious to make progress I suggest that he stops impeding it by raising what is quite clearly not a point of order.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Your concern for the interests of this House and of Back Benchers is highly respected. Will you intimate whether it is the usual practice of the House—I do not in any way seek to question your decision on the previous debate—for right hon. and hon. Members to be entitled to an answer at the end of a debate when many questions have been raised to which answers have not been given?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not ask me to make judgments about the contents of speeches. That is not a point of order.

9.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to make a serious point of order; I am trying to be helpful. Of course I am not saying that my hon. Friends and Opposition Members have not been helpful and have not made proper points of order. You will know that it is free business tonight—it is not whipped and there is a free vote. On the basis of the free vote, if we take away the payroll vote from the last three Divisions, the Government lost them. Therefore, on a free vote in the House of Commons, the business has been lost.

You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the last time that we debated this issue my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said that he would bring before this House measures to do with consultation. We do not have those measures before us. As the Leader of the House is present, he may wish at this stage — because the Government, apart from the payroll vote, have lost the support of the House and because my right hon. and learned Friend, busy man as he is, has not had time to frame the vital amendment which he has promised—to raise a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One at a time, please. I was about to say that I hope not to get many more such helpful points of order.

Mr. Cocks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have noticed that when I raised my original point of order I did it in the firm's time, so to speak, and was not in any way impeding the progress of the Bill. At that time, while saying that my material was not within your purview, you pointed out that the Lord Privy Seal was present and had heard my remarks.

As some time has elapsed and there have been two Divisions, during which time the Lord Privy Seal has had time to reflect, I invite the right hon. Gentleman to show his hand to the House. We are used to his performances on a Thursday, when he puts us in mind of K. S. Ranjitsinhji with his deft leg glances and defalcations behind the wicket. I suggest that it is now time for him to put his foot down the wicket, hit the ball over the sight-screen and tell us exactly what his intentions are.

I have already referred to items which have appeared in *The Times* about the right hon. Gentleman's concern over late sittings of the House. Last week he was remarkably forthcoming; unlike any former Leader of the House, he gave an intimate preview of the recess dates weeks in advance. As a former Government business manager, I deprecate his precedent because one does not lightly give away some of the best shots in the locker.

Having done that, will the right hon. Gentleman now be equally forthcoming about whether he had been in contact with the Government Whips' Office and put forward the idea that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might be tempted into accepting the closure when only four hon. Members had spoken and the case had hardly begun to be rehearsed? I invite the Lord Privy Seal to come clean with the House and say exactly how we lesser mortals fit into his master plan of proceedings.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I feel encouraged by such elegant oratory from the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) to make a few remarks. I hope, however, that he will allow me to substitute for K. S. Ranjitsinhji a superb Gloucestershire cricketer; I should like to be thought of in terms of Jessop.

I note that the right hon. Gentleman regards the announcement of a very tentative Easter recess date as coming within the terminology of best shots. That is a most generous judgment of best shots and I thank him for his kindness at this hour.

On the substantive point, the right hon. Gentleman knows that, in these matters of closures and so on, I have no comment, except to say that the House is well advised to observe the judgment of the Chair.

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The contribution of the Leader of the House in handling these matters puts one more in mind of the great Yorkshire cricketer Mr. Boycott, and I hope that he has a long innings.

Since you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have to make the judgment in the matter of points of order, may I put the plea that I had just begun to enter my argument when I was cut off in my prime by the Patronage Secretary? If there are any more points of order, there is a serious possibility that I will not be able to deliver to the House the full benefit of my speech. I hope that this is the last point of order that is made——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope it is the last point of order because once again it is one that implicitly challenges my judgment. I listened at considerable length to what the hon. and learned Gentleman was saying. I must tell him that that helped in my final judgment about whether I should accept the closure. The House would be well advised to accept the concluding remarks of the Leader of the House.

New Clause 13

HEALTH AUTHORITIES

'Any proceedings of a health authority in relation to an application or proposed application under section 1 of this Act shall be subject to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, save that section 1(2) of that Act (power to exclude the public by resolution) shall not apply to such proceedings.'.—*[Mr. Dobson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Dobson: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The House is clearly in two minds. I do not think hon. Members are clear about whether this is a one-day game or a timeless test. Nevertheless, I hope that the new clause will command the support of all hon. Members, whether they are in favour of, or opposed to, putting fluoride in the water. Whatever one's point of view, there is clearly no case for furtively or secretively deciding to put fluoride in the water. The new clause would require any health authority to discuss and decide on, in a public part of its meeting, the addition of fluoride to the water in its area.

When the matter was discussed in Committee we moved an amendment which would have required any decision or discussion on fluoridation by a water authority to be in a public part of its meeting. That was voted down, partly because there is no such thing as the public part of a meeting of a water authority because this Government changed water authorities from public bodies which met

[Mr. Dobson]

in public to private and furtive bodies which no longer meet in public. It was galling to hear various Conservative Members, who had happily gone into the Government Lobby in support of that change, advocating open decisions which were openly arrived at. How could that happen when water authorities, which habitually met in public, have been changed to bodies which perpetually meet in private? However, that does not invalidate our proposed new clause.

When we put forward a similar amendment in Committee the Minister responded that there was no need to make it a legal requirement because the Secretary of State would issue a circular and everything would be all right. I was reminded at the time of the words "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away". The fact is that those who issue circulars can withdraw them and issue others in their place. Therefore, we felt that it was unsatisfactory to rely on an undertaking that circulars would be issued. We put down the new clause for the Report stage in the hope that the Government would accept it.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong, but is it not the case that a circular is purely advisory and has no mandatory effect, and that it would be within the law for a water authority which did not wish to conduct such discussions in public to read the circular, consider it and reject the advice given in it?

Mr. Dobson: That is right. That is another reason for rejecting the Minister's assurance that he was prepared to meet our point by the issuing of a circular. The hon. Gentleman has taken up one of the reasons why we are not satisfied that the issuing of a circular would meet our point.

I commend to the Tory Members who are still present the proposition that such matters should be discussed openly at the open parts of meetings by drawing to their attention—this may send a shiver through some of them—the advocacy of the Prime Minister, who in 1960 was then the humble hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). In her maiden speech she introduced a private Member's Bill, which was known as the Public Bodies (Admission of the Press to Meetings) Bill. She advocated that all major decisions by public bodies should be taken in the presence of the press and the public. I think that she was right to do so. She said:

> "I hope that hon. Members will . . . consider that the paramount function of this distinguished House is to safeguard civil liberties rather than to think that administrative convenience should take first place in law."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1357-58.]

It would be administratively convenient to some to debate and decide upon fluoridation in private. As someone who is strongly in favour of putting fluoride in water, it seems that that would not be a good idea. If the legitimate doubts of some members of the public are to be dealt with properly, it is necessary for debates and discussions to take place in public so that everyone knows what is going on and no one has the impression that some hole-in-the-corner decisions are being arrived at.

The once humble hon. Member for Finchley, who is now the right hon. Member for Finchley and the Prime Minister, will, I hope, insist when she is marshalling the payroll vote this evening that the principles she upheld in 1960 be applied. The right hon. Lady claims to be conviction politician and we must ensure that anyone w makes that claim is not allowed to decide that he or s is covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 remind those who are not wholly familiar with th measure that it allows convictions of more than 10 yea standing to be wiped from the public record. I do n believe that people's political convictions should allowed to be wiped from the public record.

I hope, therefore, that the Minister will accept the ne clause. If it is imperfectly drafted—I am always rea to accept that something that I have drafted may imperfect—I hope that the Minister will be willing say that he accepts the principle that these issues must discussed and decided in the public parts of meetings a will be prepared to introduce appropriate amendments these lines in another place.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I hope that I can reassure t right hon. and hon. Friends, especially those who felt th I leaped into the previous debate rather precipitately af two hours had elapsed, that on this occasion I interve early with the intention of being helpful. There is difference of opinion between the hon. Member Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), most of my ho Friends on both sides of the argument and Government. We share the hon. Gentleman's belief th decisions of this sort should be taken by health authorit sitting in public, subject to one reservation which I ho everyone will accept: we believe that authorities m have the right to close meetings if public disorder threatened.

I tried to give an undertaking in Committee that would ensure that this procedure would be followed offered administrative guidance, which we intended to by circular. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (M Maxwell-Hyslop) has rightly observed that circulars not legally binding. We could use the powers of my ri hon. Friend the Secretary of State to issue legally bind directives if health authorities resisted circulars. Giv that the new clause has been tabled again, I appreciate t that is not thought to be wholly satisfactory and, inde that it could be reversed by some perverse successor to present Government. Therefore, we are prepared to acc the argument that this should be made a statut obligation upon the health authority.

9.30 pm

Unfortunately, the drafting is not wholly acceptab The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (M Dobson) has closely followed points that arose in Committee debate. I am advised that section 1(2) of Act is usually used by health authorities when they cl their meetings because of the unfortunate public diso which breaks out from time to time. It is arguable that t have common law powers to close meetings in any ev and that section 1(8) of the Act gives them the necess powers. Nevertheless, doubt would be raised if particular provision were enacted in its present form.

I therefore give an undertaking that in another place Government will table their own amendment, drafted parliamentary counsel, which will achieve the purpose I have described, so that health authorities have a statu duty to meet in public to decide whether to ask fluoride should be added to the water. But this will subject to the necessary reserve powers to go into pri session if disorder to the proceedings is threatened.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will the Government's amendment cover public voting as well as public discussion? It is important that the public should know what advice has been given to the members of the authority by those who have a duty to advise them. The public is also entitled to know about an authority's debate and conclusions, just as we in this place vote in public.

Mr. Clarke: I shall consider that point. My belief is that health authority votes are taken in public. I am certainly familiar with hearing the figures for either side when an authority vote has been taken on a contentious matter. I also believe that authorities can have a recorded vote when someone insists upon it. I shall consider my hon. Friend's point, and I agree that there is no reason why votes on the issue, as well as proceedings, should not be made available to the public.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I was surprised that my right hon. and learned Friend did not refer to Scotland, where the procedures are substantially different from those in England. The new clause would not cover Scotland, where, rather than dealing with health authorities, we are dealing with regional authorities which have their own procedures.

I was also disappointed at the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend did not fulfil what I thought to be an obligation to table amendments on consultation before we reconsidered the Bill. In the amendment which I expected him to table, we could have dealt with the issue at the heart of the Bill — consultation between the district and regional councils in Scotland.

My right hon. and learned Friend did not even refer to the regional authorities which in Scotland act as water authorities. He will probably realise from my amendments to the Bill that I want the district councils to have the right to consult the regional councils, hopefully in public. That would ensure that everyone in a region—and everyone in a region also lives within a district in Scotland—has a right to know exactly what the councillors are doing and the arguments that they are advancing on whether or not fluoridation should take place.

That is crucial, because the public in Scotland want to know. They are also anxious to know whether the regional water authorities are prepared to provide differential water supplies to those districts which do not wish to introduce fluoridation.

Will what is proposed in the context of English authorities be equally detailed in respect of Scottish local government and the administration of local government through the regions and districts? Only if my right hon. and learned Friend gives me that undertaking will I be satisfied.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I do not find myself completely happy with new clause 13, proposed by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). On an initial reading of the clause I saw nothing wrong with it in principle but, on further consideration and particularly after listening to the hon. Gentleman, I feel that the clause serves only to confuse the more fundamental issues that should be considered here. After listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech in support of his new clause I feel that it is because of his own prejudicies in the matter that our attention is being diverted from the important points.

Mr. Marlow: I am very interested to see the way in which my hon. Friend is developing his speech. We have heard from my right hon. and learned Friend that he intends to accept the amendment. I wonder if my hon. Friend will agree with me that such is the state of the new clause now before us that, although it would be a good thing if my right hon. and learned Friend brought forward a proper amendment of this sort, the safest thing to do in all the circumstances would be to vote against this new clause.

Mr. Jones: I take the point made by my hon. Friend and we shall be watching with keen interest the form of the Government's official response to new clause 13, or even to new clause 1, which was all that we managed to debate this time last week. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred to a substantial area —he glossed over it, but I would think it a substantial area — of public doubt over the whole question of fluoridation. He felt that people would want to know about the decisions being taken.

How does this clause help to assuage public doubts on this matter? The hon. Gentleman wants to make sure that health authorities take these decisions in public, but this touches on the fundamental fault of the Bill — that a nominated body should be given the power to take a decision on such an important subject. In my definition —and I would have thought the definition of many, particularly the people who have doubts about this—the health authorities are established to administer the National Health Service, not in any way as policy decision taking bodies. That cannot be the function of a nominated body which owes no allegiance to a democratic electorate.

The National Health Service is only a part, although a substantial part, of the health care of the nation. The responsibility for public health clearly involves the responsibilities of others. My own feeling in this matter is that the local authorities should be brought into this field —even completely to replace the health authorities and their involvement in this. I feel that in no way can a health authority, as a nominated body, be regarded as responsible for the public or be thought of by the public as responsible when taking decisions in this matter of the fluoridation of water. I am unhappy with this new clause. I do not feel that it adds a real safeguard.

Mr. Dobson: Many Members of the Opposition, certainly including myself, are extremely doubtful about the current functions and the processes of appointment of members of district health authorities. Can we count on the hon. Gentleman's support if we think there ought to be rather more local influence brought to bear in such matters as hospital closures, whether renal units are open or whether, just south of the river, the cardiac unit at Guy's hospital is going to be closed down for four months? Does he not think that those are similar significant matters which perhaps ought not to be left to the nominated health authority?

Mr. Jones: I note what the hon. Gentleman says and I will, of course, listen closely to any argument that he puts forward. But my response to those arguments may be the same as those that he put forward this evening which convinced me that new clause 13 should not be pursued. I regard health authorities as administrative bodies and not as policy decision-making bodies.

Sir Dudley Smith: I shall be extremely brief. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister proposes to accept the new clause. Modest as it is, it is a step in the right direction after some of the other proposals that have been put forward.

I intervene only to say to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that I was present on the day when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister moved her private Member's Bill admitting the press to public meetings. It was a brilliant speech that presaged great things to come. It helped members of the press to get into quite a number of public authority meetings from which they had previously been banned. Over the years the position has improved, and I should have thought that it was just about right today. There are always claims that other authorities should be open to the media, but the situation was regularised in 1960 and has improved since then.

Perhaps there is a good case for giving admission to the meetings of water authorities. I know that a private Member's Bill on the subject is in limbo and probably will not reach the statute book, but it is important that the media should be able to attend meetings where important issues such as fluoridation are discussed. The same applies to health authorities. There are many instances when it is right and proper that the press should not attend, but there are other occasions when the press should act as a safeguard for the people.

In those circumstances, I welcome the new clause, but I am afraid that it does not go quite far enough.

Mr. McGuire: I have an apology to make. I think that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) was on his feet when I scribbled him a note saying, "Keep it going, I am going for my dinner." When I returned to the Chamber, I found that we had moved on a bit. We are now discussing a new clause that I support. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the fact that I was not in the Chamber to hear my hon. Friend, who wants to aid the Bill's passage—I shall not quibble with that yet, as that is probably a matter for Third Reading —make a no doubt brilliant and lucid speech about the new clause.

My hon. Friend referred to this issue in Committee. I have no doubt that he has now added to the brief speech that he made in Committee, pressing the Minister to allow more public ventilation of this subject. The more we allow the public to listen to what I hope will be compelling arguments as to why the water should not be fluoridated, and the more light we can throw on the matter, the less fluoridation there will be. I know that that is not the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, and that he firmly believes that, if people listen to the arguments, they will be persuaded. But, like me, he is a democrat. Incidentally, all hon. Members should be careful, when making party points, not to impugn the integrity of other hon. Members. But I am sure that, like me, my hon. Friend does not want things that affect millions of people—we are told that 5 million people in this country receive fluoridated water — to be done secretly, because that would offend against a deeper principle of democracy that all hon. Members subscribe to. The House has not given a green light to that. Fluoridation may be carried out, but all the facts must be known. The drift of the argument is that it is a good thing to fluoridate. I am offended that undemocratic bodies ca make the decision. The least we can do is to allow th public to listen to the reasons why the authorities are s persuaded.

The Bill is a bad Bill and we should not have touche it with a barge pole. However, in one or two cases it i written into the Bill that there must be unanimity. Th district health authorities and the area and regional healt authorities must be persuaded that fluoridation is a goo thing. The water authorities must also be persuaded o that.

Although I wanted to speak before the closure, th matter was no doubt fait accompli because time wa pressing and the Government wanted to move on. Las Tuesday night and early on Wednesday morning th Government could not carry the payroll vote. I woul have liked to speak on other amendments that touche on this principle. We should allow the public into th meetings so that secret deeds cannot be done which wi affect many people. At present, 5 million people receiv fluoridated water. I doubt whether those people wer seriously aware of what was debated when the decisio was taken to put artificial fluoride into the water to th presently permitted degree. If it had been known tha the matter was to be publicly debated in a committee the public would have attended in great numbers. If th public could not be persuaded then, they would hav sought to influence the authorities later that it was no a good thing to do.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I wish to raise a point with th hon. Gentleman before he moves from the concept o unanimity, which he referred to as being enshrined in th Bill. He talked about the health authorities and the wate authorities having to agree. He may be overstating th case. As I understand it, the water authority is more in th position of being required to add fluoride to the wate supply, if it is so directed by the health authority. Th grounds for deciding not to do so are related to the concep that, in the opinion of the statutory water authority something is reasonably practical and that it does no increase the fluoride content of the water supply to area outside that covered by the application. That does not f in with the hon. Gentleman's concept of unanimity tha includes the water authorities.

9.45 pm

Mr. McGuire: The hon. Gentleman seems to sugges that unanimity is not required, and that a district o regional health authority can decide to fluoridate. Th authority will have arrived at that decision democratically although the methods of gaining membership of thos bodies are undemocratic. The majority of members ar appointed and are not subject to public recall or the publi invigilation of why they reach their decision. The hon Gentleman seems to say that such an authority ca persuade an unwilling water authority, providing it technically feasible. I understand from our deliberation in Committee that the water authority and the district regional health authority must both be persuaded. Ther must be unanimity. It is not a question of whether a wate authority believes that there is a technical impediment fluoridating the water to the required level. It could hardl put fluoride in if that requirement was not met. understand that the matter goes a little deeper than tha In Committee, some hon. Members believed that one

the best things to come out of a bad Bill was the fact that the area for which a water authority was responsible had to be conterminous with the district health authority area and that they could not overlap, although there is a provision in case of emergency.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *rose*——

Mr. McGuire: I shall give way to one of the foremost lay experts in the House, who I hope will confirm that I am right.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I would not plead guilty to that description, but the hon. Gentleman is wholly right. This is not a matter of opinion but of what the Bill states. Clause 1 makes it clear that the health authority simply gives permission. It does not require the water authority to put fluoride in the water. Nor need we waste time about what "health authority" means, because clause 7 shows that in England and Wales it means any district health authority. There is no nonsense about regional health authorities having any locus standi in this matter.

Mr. McGuire: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is a formidable expert on such matters, for confirming what I said to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and what I said before he intervened. The best way to throw light on such matters is to allow the public to attend water authority meetings. The English disease is secrecy.

The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) mentioned the Bill which the Prime Minister introduced in 1960, when she was just a slip of a girl. When he replied to that debate, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science rather overdid the alliteration. He was especially fond of the letter "c", and he said that the right hon. Lady's speech was cogent, composed and courageous. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that the right hon. Lady's speech was an example which we should all follow. Let us eliminate secrecy as far as possible. Let us tear down the iron curtains of secrecy and let more public light be shed on decisions that affect the public. In many cases, decisions detrimental to them are made secretly at meetings which they cannot attend.

Sir Dudley Smith: The person who replied to that debate was the late Lord Brooke, then Mr. Henry Brooke, who at that time was the Minister for Housing and Local Government.

Mr. McGuire: We sometimes have to correct the footnotes of history. I was led astray by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Dobson: Both recollections are correct. The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) was talking about a Second Reading debate. The over-fulsome tributes were made by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Sir K. Joseph), who was then the Under-Secretary, now the Secretary of State, for Education and Science, who was replying to the Third Reading debate.

Mr. McGuire: We are all right. It is something that we can agree with one another. Whoever made the speech to which I referred went overboard with alliteration when he said that the right hon. Lady was courageous, composed and cogent. We could add other "c"s and say that she has "considerably changed".

Mr. Marlow: The amendment suggests that at any meeting of a health authority on the subject there should be public participation and discussion. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said that the Government would accept the spirit of the amendment and bring its own participation amendment before the House of Lords.

The Bill seeks to allow a water authority, when a health authority says that it is OK, to put the wretched stuff in the water. Does the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) believe that the best place for that public participation and discussion is, as suggested, at the area health authority when all the specialists and health hygiene experts are together, or later when the water authority makes the decision?

Mr. McGuire: No undemocratic body has the right to mass-medicate people when they have no recourse. The Government enjoy a terrific majority, but I hope that as the night goes on those subjected to a payroll vote will leave us free men and women to talk about a matter of great importance. I believe that I am acting in the interests of my constituents. I see that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) wishes to intervene; I shall give way, since his interventions are usually spot on.

Mr. Fairbairn: We are discussing a matter of principle. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) has fallen into the Government's trap by using the term "mass medication". We are talking not about mass medication but about forcing the whole population to swallow medicine under the fantasy that, however poisonous that medicine might be, it might cure toothache in children.

Mr. McGuire: I do not want to cross swords with the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I defer to the hon. and learned Gentleman's greater knowledge and command of the English language and to his ability to deploy arguments. Since I am a poor old sponsored miner, I cannot hope to compete with him. The hon. and learned Gentleman has many inbuilt advantages. I use the term "mass medication" because the proposal affects the mass of people and because fluoride is not put in water to make it wholesome, but to treat an assumed medical condition. The phrase "force feeding" is more emotive than the term "mass medication". We share a common aim to bring to the attention of the public the fact that something has been done which will be accepted as mass medication or force feeding.

Mr. Fairbairn: If I may illustrate the matter, when I was studying medicine——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Water (Fluoridation) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

The House divided: Ayes 142, Noes 71.

Division No. 129] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ancram, Michael	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Arnold, Tom	Bottomley, Peter
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Bright, Graham
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.

Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. T. Garel-Jones and
Mr. M. Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
George, Bruce
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Monro, Sir Hector
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldric*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwic*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwo*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. M. Brown and
Mr. A. Marlow.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Water (Fluoridation) Bill r be proceeded with, although opposed, until any hour.

As amended, again further considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be rea Second time.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Fairbairn.

Mr. McGuire: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I only given way to the hon. and learned Member for Pe and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) when he was interrupted the necessity to put the Ten o'clock motion.

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. and learned Member Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) finished? Do not let provoke him.

Mr. Fairbairn: I cannot remember where I had beg I had put down an amendment that did not receive y favour, Mr. Speaker, suggesting that local authori could put substances in the water to prevent schizophren We have a Government who at one moment say that t want us all to have dinner, and as totalitarians try to short the debate, but when we all want to go to bed t prolong the debate.

Mr. McGuire: The proceedings were interrupted our Standing Orders, and I am not certain at what point hon. and learned Member wanted me to give way to hi but he has said something that I hope will give the Minis food for thought.

In support of this new clause, which I believe that Government have accepted, I want to develop the po about how these meetings, to which the public will allowed to go, will take shape and form. I cannot see sense in simply having the public come into a meeting t they cannot influence. Decisions will be taken that t would object to in a normal democratic way, but they h no right of recall and cannot even chastise these peo because they are appointed undemocratically.

Here we have a democratic House of Commons, giv tremendous powers to certain people that we should no giving them to. However, given that they will have the

it is not merely a matter of allowing the public to come in to observe the undemocratic procedures, even though they rail against what has been decided. It is essential that we should be able to influence these people before they take these decisions, and I do not know of what the Minister was approving.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have now recalled the matter that I was raising when I was rudely interrupted once more by the Government managers. The hon. Gentleman referred to mass medication. When I studied medicine I was one of the first guinea pigs of mass radiography. This form of screening was provided to help everybody who underwent mass radiography. The mass medication referred to by the hon. Gentleman is not intended to help everybody who has to swallow it. However, everybody will have to swallow it in the hope that it will help somebody else.

10.15 pm

Mr. McGuire: This matter was thoroughly thrashed out on Second Reading and in Committee. It remains one of the principal objections of those who support my point of view. I recall the famous saying of John Stuart Mill that over his mind and body every citizen is sovereign. The Bill takes away one of his sovereign rights. He has to receive a substance which, as the hon. and learned Gentleman said, is assumed to benefit a small number of people but which cannot possibly help the vast majority of those who will have to take it, whether they like it or not.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): My hon. Friend and I have crossed swords from time to time on this question. Nobody is consulted about the inclusion of the 33 chemicals that are introduced into Thames water, including a highly toxic substance, sulphuric acid. They are a prophylaxis. We are referring on the one hand to mass medication, which is an emotional term, and on the other hand to the provision of a prophylaxis, which is an unemotional term. The difference between my hon. Friend and I is that he is referring to medication while I am dealing with the prevention of illness.

Mr. McGuire: My hon. Friend said that 33 artificial substances are added to the water and that I am making a big cry about adding a 34th. However, I understand that all of those artificial substances are added to make the water wholesome and to take out the bugs which would otherwise make people ill. That is completely different from adding a substance which does not increase the wholesomeness of the water and which we believe could possibly have bad side effects.

Sir Dudley Smith: The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech, but I believe he is wrong to refer to mass medication. He is not right about that, nor, with respect, is my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) who referred to force feeding. Surely this is preventive medicine, the idea being that children under the age of five should not develop dental caries. What possible excuse there can be for saying that the remainder of the population of this country should have to drink fluoridated water I do not know. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could enlighten me.

Mr. McGuire: I do not disagree fundamentally with the hon. Gentleman. Those who say that a Bill of this kind is needed believe that fluoride should be added to the water at a specified level because it will have lasting benefits, and that it is even better if a child benefits from fluoridated water while it is being carried in its mother's womb. Then the benefits are lifelong. The promoters of the Bill believe that fluoridation delays the onset of dental caries, although it does not eliminate it. Nobody has tried to pretend that the answer to dental hygiene is to provide fluoridated water for people, even to a child when it is being carried in its mother's womb, and then to say that they will not need to do anything else. It is being said that the very young will get some benefit for a time and it may well be that that benefit will last a long time. But I return to the main proposition. If they are not educated when they are in the care of their parents properly to look after their teeth by means of their diet, we can put fluoride in the water until we are blue in the face and it will not have the lasting benefit that people say it will have.

Mr. Pavitt: My hon. Friend will have studied the Royal Commission's report. He is right to say that the addition of fluoride is only one of 23 ways of preventing oral disease, malfunction of teeth and gastro-enterology. But it is one thing that would help ordinary working class kids. If, after 1 April, when dental charges will be massively increased, parents are able to take children to the dentist every six months, pay extra for fluoride milk and do a number of other things, all that will be helpful. But fluoridation will be one method of helping the children of the 4 million unemployed, at a cost of 10p per citizen per year, by giving them some protection for some considerable time.

Mr. Speaker: Before the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) is tempted to go down that track, may I bring him back to the new clause, which is about admission to meetings. That point is rather broad of the new clause and may lead him to indulge in a Second Reading speech.

Mr. McGuire: One gets led down many alleyways and byways that one did not intend when giving way. However, I say with great respect that this is a debating Chamber and we devalue it if we simply read out rather quickly a speech without giving way. In fact, that is contrary to our tradition. Whether one can debate with great expertise or simply with great determination and sincerity, one must defend one's argument, and that is what I am trying to do.

I am trying to consider the form of the meeting and the purpose of letting the public in. Is it merely to rail against those who have taken decisions which we disagree with or to try to influence those decisions? We should be trying to find out the best use that can be made of those meetings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) and I have been friends since I came into the House. He has been here for longer than I have and we all know how he approaches matters and what motivates him. He is motivated by what I would call his Socialist principles. However, they do not motivate me any less. I am proud to be a Labour Member, and I too want to help anybody who is disadvantaged in life. My hon. Friend is trying to persuade me that we should try to find a means to help the 4 million unfortunate children who, if they do not receive some assistance from the State by means of a fluoride additive, whether it comes from water, medicine or in some other way, will grow up with bad teeth or with teeth that will be subject to more stresses and strains than

[Mr. McGuire]

if the Government had taken on board the need to help them. I hope that my hon. Friend is persuading the Minister because that is the most important thing.

That is a dangerous argument because we must then ask about other important or more important matters with which the State should concern itself in the upbringing of children. Let us consider a better way in which to help children get fluoride into their bodies at an early age. I am only saying that it cannot be right to ram it down the throats of 40 million or 50 million who will gain no benefit at all. I am glad that I have carried my hon. Friend with me——

Mr. Best: I have followed the hon. Gentleman's argument closely and I agree with much of what he said. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) said that there was no substantial difference between adding chlorine to the water to make it potable and adding fluoride for the purposes of prophylaxis. But is there not a fundamental difference between adding something to a substance to prevent it from doing harm and adding something to a substance to have a positive effect on somebody's health?. Those are the two issues. It is manifest, axiomatic and patent from the argument about where the difference lies that the hon. Gentleman has not carried his hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South with him.

Mr. McGuire: One tries to accomplish many difficult jobs in life. I doubt whether I could carry the hon. Gentleman with me in a 10-minute intervention. The hon. Gentleman and I serve on the same Committee and must declare an interest in that we are both opposed to artificially fluoridating water for whatever assumed benefit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must return to the new clause.

Mr. McGuire: You are right, Mr. Speaker, to remind me of that. However, as I said earlier, part of our tradition —in which I know you are a great believer, and you uphold the rights of Back Benchers — is that we give way to our colleagues. If we did not, your job would be made much more difficult as you would continually be calling order and there would be absolute pandemonium. We must try to defend our arguments. I realise that I am doing that in a botched manner, but it is the best that I can do.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) must try to persuade my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) that this matter is not on all fours. This point is relevant to the issue of meetings because such matters will have to be debated. No doubt someone will try to explain why there should be more fluoridation. I understand that 33 substances are already added to the water, and some may ask what difference 34 would make. I do not know whether 33 is the correct number; it could be 23, 33 or 43. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South is an authority on these matters. Indeed, if I get the opportunity to read a list in my possession, I shall keep the debate going for a few more minutes. I have no doubt that the substances have wicked-sounding Latin names that would frighten us to death — other than those who understand Latin, and I am not one of them. The meetings will have to persuade the public that they add thos substances to the water to make it wholesome and pot and to take out any bugs and pollution. However, not them is put in to achieve the same purpose as fluoride-

Mr. Lawrence: Is not the truth of what the Gentleman has said borne out by the fact that the dec of the Strathclyde court that fluoride did not make w potable has caused the Government to introduce the Other additives to water help to make it wholesome. according to the court ruling, fluoride does not do Therefore, the distinction is well and truly made le and the hon. Gentleman is right in what he says.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may be, but it has not to do with the committee meetings about which the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) is speaking.

Mr. McGuire: There is no doubt that whether o the public know that there are 33 substances o substances added to the water, I want them to be aware another substance is either already in the water or a to be added to it which should not and need not be pu

What will be the point of the public being able to a the meetings if they cannot influence those who wi taking the decisions? The decision-makers will no elected. Indeed, their position must affront the democ instincts of hon. Members. While I would not impug integrity of Conservative Members and say that the in favour of secrecy whereas Opposition Members are I urge them to agree that we should not have secrecy w it is not necessary, especially when, as in this case, a cloak may be thrown over the deliberations of those unlike hon. Members, are not subject to recall or, topical, any form of reselection.

Mr. Marlow: Before the hon. Gentleman leave question of reselection——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that reselectio be discussed at the meetings about which the hon. Me is speaking.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is deeply conc about consultation, participation and the involveme the public. Does he think that the public have involved thus far in this process of fluoridation? example, has there been a clamour for the water supp be fluoridated?

Mr. McGuire: The thought of reselection concen the mind wonderfully. I wish reselection applied to who form the district and regional health authorities same would then apply to them as applies to me. I or say something to which a number of my consti object reselection gives them power to do something it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does the Gentleman agree that the public should not on admitted to these meetings but should, under reaso conditions, be allowed to address them and put their of view?

Mr. McGuire: I was about to deal with that po agree that it would be cosmetic simply to say th public will be admitted if that will be the end of the and they will have no influence over those who ta decisions. Such meetings will then be a fraud charade, especially as there has been no clamour fro public for the water supply to be fluoridated.

The 5 million people who are at present receiving fluoridated water have not been informed. When I first came to the House I had no definite views on fluoridation. How are Members of Parliament enabled to make decisions on matters on which they have no great knowledge? We receive much bumf but also much informed correspondence which gives expert views on different subjects, including fluoridation. When I read the information about fluoridation, I formed the opinion that it was not a good thing. I sense that I am incurring your displeasure, Mr. Speaker. I shall come back to the narrow point of the form and content of the meetings. If the public are to be informed, there will have to be a public debate. The views of people who are passionately opposed to fluoridation must be heard and not just the views of John Public.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) gave an impressive list of people who had written learned articles on the dangers of fluoridation. These were not corner boy doctors but men of great eminence who can be subjected to questioning and counter argument. If the meetings are to be open to the public, there should be informed participation in the debate. If it is the intention of the Government that the public will be informed in this way, I rest content that not much fluoridation will take place. Most of all, those 5 million who now receive fluoridated water will want fluoridation discontinued.

Sir Dudley Smith: The hon. Gentleman is making a salient and important point, that apart from the public the people who make up these bodies may not themselves have expert knowledge. He said that he had to find out the information when he became a Member of the House. Surely those who serve on the health authorities will need expert advice. The hon. Gentleman referred to 37 or 38 substances which are put in water. In these circumstances, it is important that members of these bodies should be properly briefed.

Mr. McGuire: That is a most salient point.

Most hon. Members have received recently a letter headed "Fuel for the fluoridation bandwagon". It refers to deception by a man whose evidence is listened to with great interest; I think it is better that I do not mention his name. It persuaded many people to take a view contrary to that which I would wish them to have. This man said:

> "If I thought that there was the slightest risk from fluoridating water supplies to bring the concentration of fluoride up to the low levels naturally existing already in many parts of Britain and elsewhere, I would certainly say so."

The letter we received from Dr. W. W. Yellowlees from Aberfeldy in Scotland said that that statement was written by this eminent person in 1982. I wrote to him pointing out that of the total population of the United Kingdom only about 500,000 drank naturally fluoridated water.

The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) has made a relevant intervention. The public must be persuaded and informed, and it must be understood that some of those who are to take decisions are in possession of false information and will act upon it. It is proposed that we should add fluoride to the water and the hon. and learned Member for Burton has said that there will have to be a tenfold increase in the level of fluoride in the water to reach the assumed natural level. We must remember that only about 500,000 receive that water. If the average John Public picks up only parts of the argument, he will think that the Government want to make available something which is naturally beneficial. He will have the impression that he and others are deprived because they are not receiving that which is naturally beneficial. In effect, the Government are saying, "We cannot do anything about that in a natural sense but we shall do so in an unnatural sense."

It is important that on occasions the experts should have their evidence checked and that they should be cross-examined. We require an informed debate so that the public can be made aware of what is in store for them. There will be those who say, "I think that fluoridation is a good thing and I am willing to take the risk." They will be willing to surrender the principle of John Stuart Mill that over his own mind and body the individual is sovereign. They will be prepared to delegate that responsibility to another body. The public should be in a position to challenge the assertions of the so-called experts.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has allowed me to intervene, but I was not asking him to do so. However, now that he has given way to me, as it were, I shall make an intervention. That is the sort of thing that John Stuart Mill might well have said.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) will be helpful to the House by keeping the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire), who has now been speaking for an hour, on the rails. We must concentrate on the proceedings in the committees that are under discussion. The debate should not be carried any wider that that.

Mr. Fairbairn: As one who is anxious to contribute to the debate myself, Mr. Speaker, I would rather keep the hon. Gentleman on the buffers. Even if the requirements that the hon. Gentleman suggests are implemented, whereby water authorities in England and Wales would be involved in the consultative process, what possible power would be in the hands of the ordinary member of the public who was convinced that fluoride was a cumulative poison to avoid fluoridated water?

Mr. McGuire: I thought that earlier in my speech the hon. and learned Gentleman wished to catch my eye to tell me, as it were, that he wished to intervene. I probably mistook the hon. Gentleman for someone else. I shall await with interest the hon. and learned Gentleman's contribution to the debate. I am sure that he will illuminate dark corners and stimulate most hon. Members, especially those who are convinced that fluoridation is not a bad thing, to participate. In fact, one of the worst things that they could do would be to allow fluoridation.

I have tried to direct myself to the heart of the new clause, which is that the public should have a presence at the authorities' meetings. If that means that they can be present without playing a positive part in the deliberations that ensue, that cannot be said to be good enough. I would not want to touch the Bill with a barge pole, but we must deal with it as it is. If there is to be real participation, a cosmetic change will not be sufficient. However, if the new clause, which has been accepted by the Government, means what I understand it to mean, we have made some progress in improving a bad Bill.

Water (Fluoridation) Bill

10.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: This is an important measure which will potentially affect every man, woman and child in the country——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I can put the hon. Gentleman on the right track. I know that this is an important matter, because I have been in the Chair for a long time listening to the debate. Will he tell us what will happen in these committees, which is what the new clause is about?

Mr. Marlow: This is a desperately important measure, and therefore the committees are particularly important.

So far, the Government have got this measure through purely as a result of the payroll vote. The Bill includes these committees, and potentially that is of vital importance to everyone in the country. It was not included in the Government's programme. Therefore, it is right that an hon. Member of this House should remind the other place of the lack of support in this House for the measure.

Such lack of support can also be demonstrated in relation to the new clause. I intend to be brief, because if a point is worth making it is normally better to make it quickly——

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I shall happily give way to my hon. and learned Friend, but I know that other hon. Members wish to speak and I am aware that Mr. Speaker would wish me to be brief.

Mr. Fairbairn: The proper constitutional reason for a typical Government acolyte, such as my hon. Friend, to be brief is that the unfortunate party on the Government side of the House has been briefed since 3.30 pm on exempted business for one and a half hours on the important motion in respect of the draft British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has absolutely nothing to do with new clause 13. We must stick to the new clause, otherwise there will be chaos.

Mr. Marlow: We are addressing our minds to public participation and consultation in the context of this important measure, and this is a vital part of our consideration. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) tabled the new clause, but sadly, I find it impossible to accept it as proposed. Although I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend has said that the Government will introduce an amendment on public participation, consultation and debate, it would be wrong for the House to accept the new clause, even though it was tabled with the best of intentions.

The new clause begins with the words "Any proceedings". When do the proceedings begin? Let us suppose that the chairman of a health authority goes out to dinner with his wife and a group of friends—perhaps eight people in all. If one of them, also a member of the health authority, leans across the table and says, "What about this fluoride business? The health authority next door has it and it says that it is a good thing. Shall we have it here?", will that be a proceeding of the health authori When does a proceeding begin? I appreciate the p which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancra trying to make, but I do not think that he has b sufficiently succinct.

As I said to the hon. Member for Makerfield (I McGuire), if we want public debate and participati should it be at the level of the local health author Would it not be better to let the health experts, th looking after our health and well-being, come together discuss these things, and then, distilling the gen knowledge and beliefs of all of them, come up with t impressions, ideas and decisions and say, "Yes, believe that we should allow our local water authorit fluoridate the water"? The water authority would then able to make that decision. We are not telling the w authority that it should; we are saying that it may.

I believe—and the hon. Member for Holborn and Pancras may want to take me up on this — that debate should come at that later stage, with the w authority.

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman had paid as m attention to the proceedings on this Bill as he someti claims to have done, he might have noted that Committee I moved a virtually identical amendm applying to water authorities. If any Tory present voted for it along with myself and my hon. Friends would have got through.

Mr. Marlow: I have to be very humble and apolo abjectly to the hon. Gentleman. I have been throug great deal of the detail of the Bill, but I am afraid th did not pick up the points that he makes.

For various reasons, I shall have to oppose the clause. I am very much in favour of public participat and consultation—I am in favour of it generally, particularly with regard to this very important measu

Would it be in order at this stage, Mr. Speaker, welcome the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Ly (Mr. Golding), who I know is a great expert on subject?

We are to have committees, we are to h participation. My right hon. and learned Friend promised the House this. Who will be asked? How they be asked? There is a lot to be discussed. There lot of flesh to be put on these bones. Will it b requirement that when a meeting is to be held in which public can participate it must be publicised—adverti in the local newspapers, for example? Who will permitted to attend? What information will be m available? What notice should be given that a meetin to take place? It would obviously be wrong to tell public at 3 o'clock in the afternoon that a meeting is t held to discuss the matter at half past four. Government must therefore put together a sensible satisfactory scheme so that we know how this will w

What will these committees be considering? W information will be before them? We had a debate ea about monitoring the effects of fluoride on human hea on teeth, on the home, on the water supply? Will it requirement that whenever the health authority — whatever authority — meets, with public participat the reports should be brought before the meeting? If what should those reports contain?

Who will be admitted to the meetings? Will it be all public, or will it be councillors from the district autho

or the county council, or parish councillors? Will other people be permitted to be represented as of right? Will the officers of the local authority be permitted to be represented? Will people from some of the local organisations—the chamber of commerce, for example—be admitted? They surely have an interest. Will the local family practitioner committee be able to be represented? Will the local BMA, the doctors, the dentists be able to attend?

I have no intention or desire to offend any of the dentists in my constituency, but one of the things that frightens me about this measure is that the dentists are in favour of it. We are told that it is good for the teeth of the nation. Since when have dentists been in favour of the good of the teeth of the nation? It is when there is something wrong with the teeth of the nation that they do business and make money. That should be considered.

Mr. Fairbairn: There is a very good reason for dentists being in favour of the Bill. They will have more visits from patients who suffer from fluorosis. Moreover, fluoridation will inevitably cause brittleness of the teeth, and dentists will have to receive much bigger fees for trying to stick together the teeth of those aged over 30.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend is trenchant and objective as usual. It is a matter of concern, and my hon. and learned Friend has made that point very well.

We must have participation and consultation.

Mr. Best: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: I really want to get on, but if my hon. Friend presses me, I shall give way.

Mr. Best: I shall be brief. I regret to say that I disagree with my hon. Friend. I have spoken to a good number of dentists, and I have no doubt about their bona fides. I am sure that they genuinely believe that fluoride is good for the teeth and that they are motivated by a sense of philanthropy rather than by any arcane motivation that may have been suggested to my hon. Friend. I may be naive in believing that, but I firmly believe it, and, with respect to my hon. Friend, it is wrong to cast a slur on dentists when it is unnecessary to do so, because the argument against fluoride stands on its own two feet.

Mr. Marlow: I respect what my hon. Friend has said. He has made an honest point, and I hope that he does not think that I was being flippant. I genuinely accept my hon. Friend's point that those dentists who recommend fluoride do so with the best of intentions, but I believe that they are mistaken. That is one of the fundamental reasons why, as time goes by, it will become desperately important to have a proper system of public participation.

It is particularly important to have public participation, because if it is a mistake to put this wretched substance in our water supply—as I and many of my hon. Friends believe it is—the time will come when the damage will become apparent. It is only by having available the immediate recourse of public participation in debate and discussion as of right that the authorities can be made aware as soon as things start going wrong. I am afraid that the authorities are sometimes not aware of what is happening. Sometimes, like all institutions, authorities have their own momentum and vested interests. They work together and they feel that they are the experts. Hilaire Belloc once said:

> "Oh! let us never, never doubt
> What nobody is sure about
> For people who are in the know
> Assure us that it must be so."

Authorities and institutions are a bit like that. They are the clever ones who say they know, and they do not want us to know that they do not know. They pretend they know, and it is a jolly good thing if the public now and again have the right to tell them.

This issue is fundamental to the health and well-being of the nation, and it is imperative——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: I really want to get on.

Mr. Forth: In his anxiety to have public participation, is my hon. Friend not worried that, even in their wisdom, the public may be seduced by the idea of being fed fluoride as an easy way of maintaining dental health, instead of making the effort to brush their teeth? Does my hon. Friend not think that the balance between the effort of individual brushing and the easy solution of the automatic feeding of fluoride could thereby be altered, and that his argument for public participation may be at fault?

Mr. Marlow: I do not wish to stray too far from the debate. I think and hope that my hon. Friend is trying to be helpful and keep me in order. He said that if fluoride were added to the water supply in many areas the public might feel that their teeth would be all right and they could throw their toothbrushes out of the window. If the public got that impression, the damage to their teeth, whatever good fluoride might do, would be greater than at present. That is a good point, but I am not sure how it affects participation. I shall think about it.

The House must be aware that as time unwinds and we get more experience of the benefits, and more probably the problems, of fluoride in our water supplies, public participation will be absolutely fundamental.

11 pm

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): If I understood the hon. Gentleman correctly, he speaks in support of the new clause.

Mr. Marlow: No, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would make his point better if he knew how I stand. I have every sympathy and respect for the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras for tabling the new clause. I have examined it carefully, and although the intention is right and good and I am overwhelmingly in favour of public participation in and debate on the subject, the new clause is defective. I do not feel that I can support it and I, and perhaps some of my colleagues, will wish to divide on it. We are not against the intention of the new clause. The hon. Gentleman may not know that the Government intend to introduce an amendment along these lines, about which we are happy. We are pleased with my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister and with the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras for tabling the new clause, but despite that, we may have to vote against the new clause.

Mr. Golding *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Golding.

Mr. Golding: I presume that I am being called to speak in the debate, as the hon. Gentleman has concluded his

[Mr. Golding]

remarks. I think that the hon. Gentleman's knees and arguments have given way, rather than the hon. Gentleman himself.

Mr. Marlow: I have only given way.

Mr. Golding: I thought that I was being called to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that the hon. Member for Northampton North (Mr. Marlow) had concluded his speech.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was mistaken. I thought that the hon. Gentleman's knees and arguments had given way, but he has made it clear that he was giving way to an intervention.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am indeed giving way to an intervention. I am drawing my remarks to a conclusion, but some of my hon. Friends wish to cross-examine me on some of my points.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is giving way, that is correct. I thought that he had finished.

Mr. Golding: In what ways does the hon. Gentleman oppose the new clause?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has joined us fairly recently. We are dealing with a new clause which relates to those who should come to meetings. We have been ranging rather wide.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The new clause states that the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 will apply with one exception. There are two parts to the new clause. One part says that the Act will apply, and the other part says that one section of the Act shall not apply. It is important to establish whether it is reasonable to apply the Act. That is what I am asking the hon. Gentleman. I wish to address my remarks first, to the part of the new clause which states that the Act should apply. Therefore, does the hon. Gentleman think that the Act should apply in any respect?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I can help the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding), who was not here earlier. He should know that the Government have accepted the spirit of the new clause, and, as I understand it, they will introduce a similar amendment in another place.

Mr. Golding: In that case, my intervention is even more important. Having heard that the Government are prepared to accept it in spirit, I wish in body to oppose it. I want the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to elucidate his arguments so that I can follow him.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you have just compressed my argument succinctly into two sentences, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) compressed his argument into three or four sentences, is it in order for the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) to come into a debate one and a half hours after it started and ask for a brief resumé of the arguments so far?

Mr. Speaker: It is not in order, and I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced parliamentarian, would ask for such a breach of our procedures.

Mr. Marlow: Although you have ruled it out of order, Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. However, I hope he will forgive me if I do not, because I am not addressing that part of the new clause. He can advance his own arguments, to which we shall listen with great interest and respect.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend has concentrated on the participation of the public in this exercise, but the new clause is flawed in that it says nothing about the participation by the other side. It does not mention a quorum or how many people should be present. It does not say how long the authority will allow the debate to continue. The new clause could be taken at face value, someone could move that the public be allowed in, but three minutes later could move that the committee move on to next business. In that case, all participation would be nullified.

Mr. Marlow: I accept my hon. Friend's point. The new clause, against which I shall vote, says that it shall be subject to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960. I do not know what that means, so I do not know how much it helps us. As my hon. Friend knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said that the Government would introduce amendments in another place. Before the debate ends, I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would wish to advise the House, not as to the specific contents, but as to what the building blocks of those amendments will be. During my speech I have made several requests for information about how the public meetings will be organised, who will be allowed to attend, the notice of the meeting, and how what comes out of the meeting will be published. All those bits and pieces are important when one sets up such public participation exercises. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to give us further instruction on this matter before we conclude this debate.

I have tried to make, as briefly as I can, a few important points on the new clause. Sadly, I feel constrained to oppose it, although I appreciate the motives of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras in putting it forward.

Mr. Fairbairn: I cannot favour new clause 13. It may seem odd that I say that today, firstly, because it does not take Scotland into account. This afternoon, there was a Ten-minute Bill of peculiar stupidity moved by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), which was defeated on my opposition. I regret to say that, on a Bill which is alleged to be based on a free vote, the entire Government side have been whipped to be in attendance since 3.30 pm. Having nothing else to do——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is miles wide of the attendance at meetings. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is abusing procedures by seeking to introduce that argument.

Mr. Fairbairn: With great respect, I do not think that I am. It might seem to be contradictory for me at one time of the day to be grateful for a payroll vote to defeat a Bill

which makes Scotland a funny little island, and then later to object to a new clause because it does not bother to consider Scotland.

New clause 13 involves the princple that the meetings of a health authority should be open to the public. That is not satisfactory. We are talking about making every person in the United Kingdom ingest water which has been contaminated with a substance which the most reputable scientists on earth believe to be poisonous.

No one should imagine that anything that I say is an attempt to delay the House because the principles are far too important.

Lord Jauncey's judgment is irrelevant to what I am about to say, because it was about sodium fluoride. We are now dealing, among other things, with fluorosilicic acid. May I read this to the House?

"Introduction Fison's Fluorosilicic Acid, Foremost in Fluoridation—Fison's Limited. Fertiliser Division:
General: Fluorosilicic acid is a highly toxic and highly corrosive liquid

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Nonsense.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) might think that that is nonsense, but Fison's do not.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) because he undoubtedly knows a great deal about the subject and he is deeply offended by the suggestion that he is a mere York shouting from a sedentary position. My hon. Friend has a deep, detailed technical knowledge. There is a danger among those of us who have a casual technical qualification of patronising the deep learning and technical knowledge of people like my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley who wish to express their views.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker: I suspect that he is.

Mr. Fairbairn: I would be the last to forgo the valued judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is an expert on nonsense.

11.15 pm

Those who will provide fluorosilicic acid say:

"It is listed in schedule 1 the Petroleum to Corrosive Substances (Order 1970), S.I. 1970 No. 1945 precautions:—
these are substances that we shall have to drink—
"Care must be exercised while handling this material. The vapour must be inhaled. Due to the highly corrosive and toxic nature of the product"—
which is to be added to our water supply for the people who have toothache when they are five—
"particular attention must be paid to ensure that only suitably constructed storage and handling equipment is used and that the vapour is not inhaled."

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to listen to my hon. and learned Friend, but I am finding it difficult because of all the chattering that is going on.

Mr. Speaker: Come on.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sitting next to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and I am having difficulty in hearing him. I wonder whether he could start his speech again.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Uncharacteristically the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is not being ingenious about this matter. If he related his remarks to the committees or even said that the chairman would say what the hon. and learned Member is saying he might be in order.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not want to start again. The Government accept in vague principle the concept that perhaps in England and Wales, but not in Scotland, there should be the vague consultation proposed in the new clause. Every member of the public—who will not be consulted—will have to drink a substance containing a chemical which those who produce it think is included in suitable proportions. That is how this matter is related to this vague bureaucratic consultation which will not protect any member of the public from this repulsive substance.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My hon. and learned Friend has referred to the vote taken earlier today which sought to make a distinction between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Will my hon. and learned Friend express a view on the different treatment that may be required in the various committees in the context of the difference between Scottish and English law? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that these committees may have to be treated and constituted differently to take due regard of the essential differences, between Scottish and English law, on which my hon. and learned Friend is a great expert?

Mr. Fairbairn: I accept that. New clause 13 does not take the structure of Scottish local government into account at all. Once some vague consultation procedure operates—my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister gave blasé and, as ever, flippant assent to that procedure — the public will have no choice but to drink a substance which has certain qualities. The producers of that substance say:

"In Handling Full protective clothing, including goggles, gloves, boots and a PVC suit, should be worn. . . It is essential that tap water is available near handling points and that eyewash bottles are suitably sited."

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Is this the type of information that the chairmen or other specialist advisers at the meeting will give to those who attend the meeting?

Mr. Fairbairn: I think that that is extremely unlikely, because new clause 13 is just another gloss on what is a threat to the public. The producers of this beastly substance continue:

"Fisons, foremost in fluoridation".

This is their advertisement. Do the producers go on to say, "Hurrah for fluoride in the water"? No, they do not. It says:

"Health hazards: 1 vapour—the vapour irritates all parts of the respiratory system and can cause severe lung damage. The T.L.V. (Threshold Limit Value) for fluorides . . . is 2·5 mg/m^3 of air. (Health and Safety Executive note EH15/76). 2 Liquid—flurosilicic acid burns the eyes severely and also the skin. If swallowed, the acid would cause severe internal irritation and damage. Note: Symptoms may develop after several hours."

[Mr. Fairbairn]

If we take Fison's advice we may still be here to see whether the symptoms develop during the course of the debate.

In my opinion, the new consultative process proposed in new clause 13 is insufficient, because we are talking about totalitarianism, where there is no choice. I thought that this was a country and Government that minded about freedom of choice. We cannot choose not to drink water. It is no good, as someone said to me tonight, to say, "Give them Malvern water." That is like Marie Antoinette and her, "Let them eat cake." The ordinary person cannot drink Malvern water.

In the consultative process will members of the public be able to point out to the chairman, or whoever it is, in England and Wales—it is not considered in Scotland—that green vegetables, tomatoes and root crops cumulatively absorb fluoride?

It is no good anyone talking about one part in a million. The consultative process cannot be, "We have only got one part in a million. Do you want it or not?" If someone happens to eat a great many vegetables and they happen to be cooked in fluoridated water and to be grown in fluoridated water, he will receive a massive dose of fluoride. The test is false. There is cumulative poison.

I was pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend said that people could be killed by fluoride. That was a major concession from him. What is the purpose of what we are discussing?

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman tell me what this is all about? Is it in connection with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960? I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will explain to me how the point relates to that Act.

Mr. Fairbairn: It is a vague attempt to educate someone who has not been present throughout the debate. The bogus consultative programme in new clause 13 at which the Government have snatched enables them to say, "This is all right." Let us understand what is all right. The Government have accepted this pseudo-consultative procedure in England and Wales because it fudges the issue, and they will accept anything that fudges the issue.

Distinguished scientists think that fluoride causes cancer, cell disturbance and genetic disease. They know that it causes harm to those on kidney dialysis. Why is it being added to the water supply? Is it to prevent us voting Socialist? That at least would be a reasonable concept. Is it to make schizophrenics passive? That would be a reasonable contribution. Is it to prevent rape or disease? Not at all, it is to prevent holes in the teeth of a few children. That is the basis upon which all members of the public are to be subjected to fluoride in its natural state which is, of course, rat poison. I do not know what, under new clause 13, the purpose of the consultation will be. Is a member of the public allowed to ask whether he is being fluoridated, and whether his water can be tested?

Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles (Bridgend): I have no wish to test my hon. and learned Friend's water. Is not the flaw in new clause 13 the fact that it does not provide for consultation? A chief officer could present a report to the meeting, which need not necessarily be itemised on the agenda as such, which could be accepted without discussion, and unless the public had notice of intent to debate or consider fluoridation, they would not know anything about it until the decision had been taken.

Mr. Fairbairn: I agree with my hon. Friend. Early, the Minister said, "Good heavens, you are not seriously suggesting to the House that we would propose a measure that would require the DHSS or the local authorities to take on more manpower." If this concession is to have any meaning, of course more manpower will have to be taken on. Who is to deliver all this poison to the reservoir? Who will do all the filtration? Who will test the water? Who will receive the complaints—non-manpower?

I see that the Bill says that it has no implications for public expenditure. The Bill says that it will force local authorities and water boards to add something to the water supply that costs money and must be put in by human beings, and measured by human beings, and thus it has implications for public expenditure. However, the Bill says that there will be no additions to public expenditure. If they get phantoms to do this at no price, they should get phantoms to man the bureaucracy and we should solve all our financial problems at a stroke.

Mr. Golding: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman making these remarks because he does not intend to speak on later amendments, and wishes to retire to bed? If not, will he make it clear how they relate to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to which the new clause applies? How do these remarks on public expenditure relate to the admission of the public and the press to meetings that have been notified, and sometimes not notified, to both press and public?

Mr. Fairbairn: I have no intention of retiring to bed until about the day after tomorrow, or the day after that. I do not wish the hon. Gentleman to imagine that there is any suggestion of my doing so. I shall tell him exactly how my remarks relate to the matter in question. It is because the public meetings Act does not provide any safeguard to the public in England and Wales, or in Scotland. Therefore, the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has suggested that if he gives his snide—his behaviour throughout the passage of the Bill has been snide and ungallant on a matter of major principle—The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should not laugh. This is a matter of major principle, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has been snide and flippant.

Mr. Best: Unwittingly, in a moment of enthusiasm, my hon. and learned Friend has been a little unfair to the Government. He said that this measure would force fluoride down people's throats. I am afraid that he is quite wrong. It is not the Government who will seek to force fluoride down people's throats. All that the Government are seeking to do is to allow non-elected health authorities to force fluoride down people's throats when it is manifestly against their will, which is a different matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The House is moving away from the subject of the new clause.

Mr. Fairbairn: I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am not moving away from the subject of the new clause. My hon. Friend does not seem to understand that my complaint about the new clause is that in Scotland there is a different water authority, health board and local authority structure.

11.30 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am sorry that so far I have only been snide and flippant. Obviously I have been treating the remarks of my hon. and learned Friend with greater courtesy than is likely to be the case in 24 hours' time if he is still speaking. However, momentarily he has, though no doubt with the assistance of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding), touched on the subject matter of the amendment and therefore provides me with an opportunity to reply to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). Acceptance of the principle that underlies the new clause will apply equally to the health boards in Scotland, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries requested.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. and learned Friend explain to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that that is not what we are talking about. Our point has got nothing to do with the health boards in Scotland. We are dealing with the water authority, which is a regional council.

Mr. Fairbairn: Although the Minister slipped into the Chief Whip's seat, no doubt nudged by one of his hon. Friends who told him that I had called him snide and flippant, but did not quite edge along to the Dispatch Box for fear that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland might worry him about it, may I point out to him that we are talking about a quite different matter. My right hon. and learned Friend said that the new clause will apply equally to Scotland. It cannot apply equally to Scotland because the situation in Scotland is totally different.

Mr. Clarke: In case the House should think that I look upon my hon. and learned Friend as a reliable messenger, I hasten to add that I had no other to carry the message than my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries that during the last three hours the whole debate has been about only the health authorities and health boards in Scotland. So far as I can see, it appertains to no other subject matter whatsoever. As we are referring to the desirability of public debate in both cases, the Government are saying that so far as the original exchange was concerned the proceedings should be held in public in both countries and that we shall make this a statutory obligation.

Mr. Fairbairn: The proceedings in Scotland are held in public. The trouble with my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister is that he does not understand this. I suggest that he moves a little closer to the Under-Secretary of State to find out what the position in Scotland is. While he does so I shall continue with my remarks. If he then wishes to intervene again — flippantly, snidely or otherwise—I shall be more than happy to allow him to do so. Surely the major fallacy of new clause 13 is the proposition that a substance, which may be of some use in preventing dental caries but which is thought by most scientists to be a danger to health, even to the point of mortality, should be added by means of Government authority to the only source of drinking water that there is. I take it that this must be a matter of principle or the payroll vote would not be here on a free vote, nor would the whole of the Government side have been here since half past three this afternoon on a bogus order about shipbuilding which is not opposed by the Opposition. The Minister takes the view that water supplies should be adulterated in order to achieve possible help for children with holes in their teeth. I understand that cigarette packets carry a Government health warning. The Government are satisfied, not on a balance of doubt or probability, that smoking causes cancer. It would be easy to add something to the water which would make anybody who smokes vomit or feel nauseous and either give up cigarettes or water. Perhaps the Minister would tell them to move on to the Malvern water.

Sir Hector Monro: Highland Spring water.

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, that comes from my constituency. If anybody had told me 10 years ago that they could persuade a Scotsman to buy water at 50p a bottle I would have said that they were mad. But the English are mad and they are buying it in vast quantities.

Mr. Best: The Government are satisfied that smoking is harmful to health and therefore merits health warnings being placed on cigarette packets. If the Government are satisfied that fluoride is beneficial to health and that there should be mass medication—I use that phrase as a form of shorthand although I know that my hon. and learned Friend does not accept it — through the medium of fluoride, is not the natural corollory of that in reverse to say that the Government should ban smoking because they are satisfied that it is harmful and causes cancer?

Mr. Fairbairn: This is an important matter. If my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister takes the view that the consultation process provided under new clause 13 for England and Wales, which does not affect Scotland— perhaps one day my right hon. and learned Friend, who gives an impression of believing himself to be omniscient, may discover the position in Scotland—is a sensible process, I am bound to say that I cannot agree. It is not a question of just drinking water to which fluoride is added one part to a million, but of eating food cooked in that water, eating food that has absorbed that water, and all the other methods of accumulating the fluoride in that water. No consultation that is proposed in new clause 13 can in any way enable the ingestion of fluoride, which is cumulative, to be measured or controlled. That is why such a consultation process is bogus. It would deceive the public into imagining falsely that their water supply was safe because bureaucrats in England and Wales had been consulted.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Surely the people about whom my hon. and learned Friend should be talking are the unelected appointed members of the health authorities in England and Wales. Will he advise me, from his considerable knowledge of the law, perhaps primarily of Scotland but to a limited extent of England and Wales, whether it will be necessary for the appointed unelected members of the health authorities, which may permit the public in when the matter of fluoridation is being discussed, should declare an interest? Those appointed people, may, in some cases, be involved with industrial companies who sell fluoride as a by-product of their manufacturing process and will therefore have a vested interest. Will such unelected appointed members have a responsibility in the presence of the public to declare that they have a vested interest?

Mr. Fairbairn: They would have no duty to declare any interest. But if the verbosity of the Bill were to be believed, that it had no effect on public expenditure, the

[Mr. Fairbairn]

fluoride would be given away by those kindly gentlemen who would deliver it, put it in the water and test it for nothing.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. and learned Friend has returned to the single most important point that he has been making. I listened carefully to what he said and I am pleased that he has done so. It is coupled with his unfair attack on our right hon. and learned Friend the Minister. Our right hon. and learned Friend the Minister is squirming because during a telephone call the Chancellor said, "All right Ken, you can have this Bill provided that there is not one penny of cost to the public sector borrowing requirement." Every hint of a concession by my right hon. and learned Friend is likely to incur cost, which will be utterly unacceptable to the Cabinet and to the Chancellor. My hon. and learned Friend must understand that that is why our right hon. and learned Friend is in a very difficult position.

There is no way that any concession on the lines requested by my hon. and learned Friend can be introduced without incurring cost. That would be outside the ambit of the Bill and the Government would be making a mockery of it if they conceded one inch. Because they cannot concede one inch, the only alternative is to drop the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will not go outside the Bill or even outside the new clause.

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall not go outside the new clause. I withdraw as uncharitable my suggestion that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister was either flippant or snide. I do so because the Government have been jumped by their officials to get through this ridiculous totalitarian Bill against the conscience of the House. They have Whipped the payroll — many, if not most, of whose members believe that the fluoridation of the public water supply is wrong and immoral, including the Scottish Whip who until recently was vice-chairman of the Scottish Still Water Association. Further, in order to make some sort of pretence that the payroll vote was not dragooned by the supreme Soviets into voting, it was brought here on the bogus motion on British Shipbuilders borrowing power.

I regard any Government who do not treat it as a matter of absolute principle that we do not doctor the water supply as failing in their duty to democracy.

Mr. Williams: The hon. and learned Gentleman has made a point that is new to me — that his colleagues have been dragooned here in relation to the business to follow this debate. I shall make it clear to all those tired Conservative Members who wish to go home that the Opposition have no intention of voting on that motion.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have always known that the right hon. Member was slow on the uptake, but if he did not know that fact when he received the Whip he must be very slow. It was a ruse to persuade hon. Members to be here to vote, unknowing what they would vote on a matter of principle — that every member of the public will be forced to take what distinguished scientists regard as a cumulative poison that is dangerous to health simply because officials think that somebody may benefit.

Mr. Golding: I have not yet discovered whether the hon. and learned Gentleman is speaking in support of or opposition to the new clause, or whether he, as I often do, is rehearsing the arguments so that he can make up his mind at the end of his speech. I do not know what attitude he is taking. He has not yet explained whether the public should be allowed to listen to the health athorities discuss these measures. He has not said whether the press should be admitted. He has not addressed himself to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. I shall be glad when he addresses himself to the question.

Mr. Fairbairn: As the hon. Gentleman came into the Chamber, when we last debated the Bill, just a little earlier than this to try to get a lift home, I took the trouble to look through the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as it affects England, and discovered that it contains no provision to enable him to cadge a lift. Why, therefore, should I address myself to his problems? The new clause is typically arrogant because those who sponsor it take the view that England and Wales are the only places on earth; it does not apply to Scotland and it is clear that the Minister does not understand the Scottish position.

I will only say in closing—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I was about to say that I will only say, in closing this part of my argument, that late at night, early in the morning and late in the afternoon though it may be, sometimes the House resorts to humour as a relief from the tedium of debate. But the Government should not misinterpret the jocularity of the House on a matter which I regard as the most dangerous interruption of human freedom that can be imagined, namely, that a poison should be put into the substance that everybody must drink. The new clause, and any other form of idiotic consultation, has no relevance to the choice of a person to drink water which has not been medicated for the purpose of halting somebody else's condition.

The Minister mentioned AIDS. I do not know whether he has yet contracted it—*[Interruption.]* If he does, it will not have been from me. Although this is a disease which appears to be possible of epidemic proportions, if suddenly some antidote were found which half the scientists said was harmful and half said was unharmful, the Minister would say, "Those who think that it harms you are idiots because I have got it."

No amount of consultation as granted under this so-called concession, misunderstanding the law and structure of local authorities in Scotland, will remedy the situation. If the Minister wants to appreciate the difficulties of the separation of this country, he had better learn something about Scotland, otherwise provisions such as this will promote it.

Whether he regards Miss McColl as edentate or idiotic, I assure him that she and her advisers, should this measure ever become law, will take the matter all the way in every court. I believe that they will triumph, and so they should.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order——

Mr. John Cope (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order I am about to put the Question. The Question is, That the Question be now put.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can take a point of order only if it relates to the Division. Otherwise I will take it after the Division.

Mr. Marlow: It is related to the Division. I believe that I started making a point of order before my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a point of order relating to the Division, he must be covered.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I intimated before my hon. Friend moved the closure that I wished to raise a point of order. I believe that I am therefore entitled to make that point of order before my hon. Friend makes his point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to do that. I have put the Question and the Tellers are now about to be named.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must put the point again. I made my point before my hon. Friend stood up. Am I not entitled to make a point of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to have understood me. I have put the Question, That the Question be now put. The House is now proceeding to come to a decision on that. I cannot have the hon. Gentleman arguing and raising points of order at this stage.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered)*: May I ask you then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether my hon. Friend on the Front Bench actually moved, That the Question be now put, or did you say "The Question is, That the Question be now put" before he asked that the Question be put?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have made it clear that the closure was moved. It is the duty of the Chair to decide whether to accept the closure motion. I accepted the motion, which was within my discretion, and I have put the Question. The House must now proceed to come to a conclusion on that Question.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered)*: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that it is wrong to argue with the referee, but I had started to make my point of order before my hon. Friend moved the closure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered)*: May I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give a ruling on the point that I made? I wished to raise a point of order and my hon. Friend did not move the closure. You then put the Question from the Chair. Is it in order for you to put the Question when my hon. Friend has not yet opened his mouth?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The closure was moved. The hon. Gentleman may not have heard it, but I clearly heard the closure being moved. It is in the discretion of the Chair whether to accept that motion. I did accept it and the House is now proceeding to come to a conclusion on it.

Mr. Marlow: I accept your assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The House having divided: Ayes 136, Noes 60.

Division No. 130] **[11.50 pm**

AYES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin

Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Carttiss, Michael
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Dalyell, Tam
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Merchant, Piers
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Pike, Peter
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Michael McGuire.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 45, Noes 135.

Division No. 131] **[12.03 am**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Dalyell, Tam
Fatchett, Derek
Forth, Eric
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haynes, Frank
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Merchant, Piers
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. John Golding.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

12.15 am

New Clause 18

TERMINATION OF APPLICATIONS UNDER SECTION 1(1)

'If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful to health he shall terminate any application made under section 1(1).'.— *[Mr. Best.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 55, Noes 129.

Division No. 132] **[12.15 am**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick

Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Dalyell, Tam
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Golding, John
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McGuire, Michael
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Merchant, Piers
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Penhaligon, David
Rowe, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Keith Best.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian [illegible]ng and
Mr. John Major.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

FLUORIDATION OF WATER SUPPLIES AT REQUEST OF HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Amendment proposed, No. 2 in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

'(2) There shall be no increase in the fluoride content of the water supplied by a water undertaker in England and Wales unless approval is given for such action by a majority in favour of it in a county council or councils, or in each district council, in the area to be affected.'.—*[Mr. Beith.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 54, Noes 124.

Division No. 133] **[12.25 am**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Budgen, Nick
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carttiss, Michael
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Golding, John
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Merchant, Piers
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Penhaligon, David
Rowe, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Malcolm Bruce.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon

Cope, John	Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Couchman, James	Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Pattie, Geoffrey
Dobson, Frank	Pawsey, James
Dorrell, Stephen	Pike, Peter
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Pollock, Alexander
Dunn, Robert	Powley, John
Durant, Tony	Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*	Rathbone, Tim
Eggar, Tim	Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Rifkind, Malcolm
Fatchett, Derek	Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Fenner, Mrs Peggy	Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman	Roe, Mrs Marion
Gale, Roger	Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Ryder, Richard
Goodlad, Alastair	Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Gow, Ian	Sayeed, Jonathan
Gummer, John Selwyn	Scott, Nicholas
Henderson, Barry	Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Hind, Kenneth	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Howard, Michael	Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*	Soames, Hon Nicholas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick	Spencer, Derek
Jessel, Toby	Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith	Squire, Robin
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*	Stanley, John
Lang, Ian	Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Lee, John *(Pendle)*	Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark	Stradling Thomas, J.
Lilley, Peter	Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	Thurnham, Peter
Luce, Richard	Tracey, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas	Trippier, David
Macfarlane, Neil	Viggers, Peter
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*	Waddington, David
Major, John	Waldegrave, Hon William
Marland, Paul	Walden, George
Mather, Carol	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Maude, Hon Francis	Watson, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick	Watts, John
Mellor, David	Wheeler, John
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*	Whitney, Raymond
Monro, Sir Hector	Wiggin, Jerry
Moynihan, Hon C.	Wolfson, Mark
Needham, Richard	Wood, Timothy
Nelson, Anthony	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Neubert, Michael	Younger, Rt Hon George
Newton, Tony	
Nicholls, Patrick	Tellers for the Noes:
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*	Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*	Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration adjourned. — *[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Bill, as amended in the Standing Committee, to be further considered this day.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I consider it a great discourtesy that the Minister moved that further consideration be adjourned after I had travelled a long way to speak. My point of order is that we could not hear the reply when you asked "What day?" On what day is the Bill to be taken again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This day.

British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers)

12.38 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I beg to move,

That the draft British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 13th February, be approved.

The draft order before us tonight concerns the borrowing limit placed upon British Shipbuilders. This is the statutory ceiling on the funds that British Shipbuilders may acquire from the Government or elsewhere — specifically public dividend capital, loans from the National Loans Fund and borrowings from the market. It does not apply to payments under the intervention fund or the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order, perhaps the Minister will wait a moment, so that we can hear him. Will hon. Members please leave the Chamber quietly?

Mr. Butcher: The limit currently stands at £1,100 million, having been raised by order last June from £1,000 million. We now propose that it be raised again, under the terms of the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers Act 1983, by £100 million to £1,200 million.

Let me stress that this is a purely permissive measure, raising the ceiling on the amounts that British Shipbuilders may borrow. It is not in itself a commitment to expenditure. Whether and what funds will be provided will be a separate matter for Parliament, dealt with through the normal Estimates procedure.

The reason for bringing forward this order is straightforward. When we introduced the last order in June 1984, we told the House that British Shipbuilders' Borrowing stood at £869 million and that we had allowed, through the external financing limit, for a further £217 million of external finance in 1984-85. The majority of that finance has been provided through public dividend capital and through the National Loans Fund and other loans associated with the modernisation of Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness. By the end of March 1985, we therefore expect total borrowing to amount to about £1,080 million.

For the financial year 1985-86, the House knows that we have set an external financing limit of £36 million, after taking account of expected proceeds from the sale of British Shipbuilders' warship yards. As part of this will be intervention fund, which does not count against the borrowing limit, it might be thought that British Shipbuilders could pass through 1985-86 still within the £1,100 million limit, but there are two areas of risk.

The first is one of timing. If most of the sales of warship yards take place later in the year, British Shipbuilders' borrowings will continue to rise in the early part of the year, possibly over the limit. Secondly, as the House knows, the completion accounts relating to the sale of Scott Lithgow have yet to be finalised. It is possible that when they are, British Shipbuilders will need to meet further costs arising from the sale.

This order, if approved by the House, will fully exhaust the provision for raising the limit under the 1983 Act. As long as British Shipbuilders remains unprofitable, its borrowings, albeit offset in the short-term by sale

proceeds, will continue to rise. At this stage I cannot tell the House when or what further legislation may be necessary in due course. We shall review the position in the autumn, in the light of the progress of the corporation, the level of sales proceeds from the warship yards, the levels of intervention fund support approved by the Commission and the level of general support that we are able to commit within the constraints of public expenditure. We shall then introduce a Bill if appropriate.

We have had no shortage of debates in the House on one aspect or another of shipbuilding. Since Christmas the House has had two wide-ranging debates in the context of the Shipbuilding Bill to extend the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme, currently being considered in another place. I shall therefore confine myself tonight to a short review of what the corporation has achieved since we laid the last order of this sort in June 1984, and to a few words about the prospects that we see for the rest of 1985. I am sure that that will remain the pre-occupation of hon. Members, as ever with debates on ship building.

In June 1984 the corporation was just recovering from the traumatic experience of the failure of Scott Lithgow and its subsequent rescue from oblivion through the sale to Trafalgar House. Our policy to dispose of the corporation's shiprepair interests was already in hand and Tyne Shiprepairs, Readheads and Grangemouth had rejoined the private sector. Considerable restructuring was in hand throughout the corporation, with 13,000 jobs lost in the first six months of 1984, and three small yards, Goole, Henry Robb and Clelands sadly forced to close through lack of work. Since then we have seen further radical developments both of our policy towards the industry and within the corporation itself.

First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in July 1984 our intention to return all warship interests and their remaining shiprepair and minor engineering interests to the private sector. British Shipbuilders has since issued sale documents for Brooke Marine, Hall Russell and Yarrow and has received bids for all three yards. The House will appreciate that I cannot give more detailed information about the identities of the bidders, or the prices, for this could prejudice the sale negotiations. British Shipbuilders is also pressing on with the preparation of sale documents for the other four yards. I understand that it will probably be ready to issue these within the next two months.

The two remaining BS shiprepair companies — Falmouth and Vosper Shiprepair—are also currently on the market. British Shipbuilders have been negotiating with several potential purchasers but have not yet been able to reach unconditional agreement on terms which the corporation regards as satisfactory.

At the same time, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that we had received the corporation's corporate plan and that we fully endorsed it primary aim of concentrating resources on a stable, cost-effective mainstream merchant shipbuilding business. The corporation has since then devoted great effort to achieving that aim. I have already described how far it is down the road of disposing of the non-merchant parts of the business. In addition, it has been pursuing its plan objective of restructuring the organisation on a basis designed to regionalise and make much efficient use of resources. The restructuring of its engine building operations from five to two main sites and the creation of a single engine building company, Clark Kincaid Ltd, provides a very clear example. This has led, sadly and inevitably, to job losses. Since June 1984 the corporation has announced 1,285 redundancies on the merchant and engine building side of the operation. British Shipbuilders has a continuing need to make itself more competitive and to win more work.

Equally there have been job losses on the warship side, principally at Swan Hunter, Vospers and Cammell Laird. This is despite the recent placing of the orders for type 22 frigates at Swan Hunter and at Cammell Laird and the announcement that Swan Hunter will, subject to agreement on price and delivery, get the order for the next type 23 frigate.

But again I have to say that these losses, sad though they are, are the price of past failures, in this case the inability to obtain a single major warship export order in the last 10 years or to compete effectively in the market for merchant ships.

Hon. Members will be aware that since the House last debated these topics in the debate on the redundancy payments scheme a significant amount of good news has emanated from British Shipbuilders. An order has been placed at Smith's dock for four ships, ultimately destined for use by Cuba. I welcome this considerable success for one of British Shipbuilders' most productive yards. At Austin and Pickersgill, where the order position was desperate indeed, management and unions reached very rapid agreement on new working practices and arrangements which have enabled British Shipbuilders to proceed with an order for two ships for another foreign owner. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has just placed an order for an advanced research vessel at Ailsa whose sister yard, Ferguson's on the Clyde has already this year obtained other valuable orders.

Most recently Govan has of course secured a £38 million order from North Sea Ferries for a major ferry of the latest design. This is a particularly welcome development, both for the work it provides for one of British Shipbuilders' most efficient yards and for the opportunity it provides for British Shipbuilders to re-enter the market for high value passenger vessels. And the string of orders has meant good news for British Shipbuilders' reorganised engine building operation, Clark Kincaid, which now has a valuable base load of six slow speed engine orders. Looking a little ahead, it is already well-known that Govan is in the running for a further major order from a Turkish owner and that Sunderland is looking at a number of prospects, including the joing development with ITM of a heavy-lift crane barge.

As a result of this progress and the considerable efforts being made by British Shipbuilders under its chairman, Mr. Graham Day, it now seems likely that it will get very close to or reach its stated order target for 1984-85 of 200,000 compensated gross registered tonnes.

Against this backdrop of a fight-back by the industry, the Government too have been fighting in Brussels to secure approval of higher rates of intervention fund. We were unable to reach a satisfactory agreement with the outgoing Commission and have now renewed our efforts to persuade the new Commission of the justice and logic of our case. We have already pressed our case with the new competition commissioner, Mr. Sutherland, and we intend to press it further when my hon. Friend sees him next week. Despite the orders I have announced, it is vital to the very survival of merchant shipbuilding in the United Kingdom in the next few years that we should get early

[Mr. Butcher]

agreement to a temporary increase in intervention fund rates to enable our industry to compete with the unrealistic prices still being quoted in the far east. I am now genuinely optimistic that the end of our long battle is in sight and that a satisfactory new aid regime will soon be in place. Meanwhile, we have of course been operating interim arrangements within the European rules. The raft of recent new orders is testament enough to the effectiveness of these arrangements.

We have had a long night and I know that some hon. Members want to contribute to the debate, but I cannot let pass the opportunity to pay the highest compliment to Graham Day. He has not received the best and most optimistic comment from some Opposition Members. I have every confidence that the corporation, under its most radical and innovative chairman yet, will provide the plan for the future and implement it. I urge the House to approve the order.

12.50 am

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Like the Under-Secretary of State, I and my hon. Friends are aware of the long preceding debate. None of us would wish to delay the House unduly and we shall not oppose the order. However, the Under-Secretary's statement was surprisingly detailed and some questions arise. I imagine that he will have the answers readily to hand.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is some doubt and dispute between those with a continuing interest in where the £1 billion for BS has gone. It would be helpful to have a breakdown of what has gone into working capital, trading losses and fixed investment to secure the future of the yards. If the fixed investment could be split between military and civil business we would have some idea of what future to envisage for those yards that will remain with BS after the Government have finished hawking off what are the only presently attractive parts of the industry. I do not expect all that information now, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman will write to me on those points.

As the pattern of sales emerges over the next few months, it would be helpful to see who has got what of the public share that has gone into the companies. It would be reassuring to see something being put back into what will remain in the public sector.

I presume that the 200,000 compensated gross registered tonnes are for those yards that will remain in the public sector, or does that apply to what is still within BS? I imagine that the target is for those yards that will remain. If not, what will be the forward coverage for those yards that will not be sold off? We know that the Government made adequate provision. They have written off all the debts and pushed out what military orders they can. We welcome that. As the Minister said, it has not prevented severe redundancies at Cammell Laird, Vosper Thornycroft and Swan Hunter in the military sector. But we welcome those orders. We are not grumbling. Indeed, we have been pushing the Government to give them. However, we should also be keen to have the order level related to not just the military business, about which we have been well informed recently, but also to the forward order cover of those yards that will not be flogged off by the Government.

We cannot, as we have often made clear previ share the hon. Gentleman's rosy view of the futur have said before that the Opposition have no groun imagining that there will be a solid base for a cont civil commercial sector — the cost-effective co mainstream civil business. Some progress has been on a small scale in some yards and we welcome th without continuing Government support, of a kind t have had no evidence of, for what will remain in the sector, we fear that we shall see the industry disint completely.

It may be that the negotiations are still at such a d stage that the hon. Gentleman cannot be more clear the state of the Commission's negotiations but information would help all hon. Members. The Gentleman will be aware that the Minister of Stat pushed on that point previously and he said that he not be expected to state precisely what level of fund was pushing for or what percentage that would rep by way of grant or support to the industry.

If the Minister could give us some idea of how negotiations have proceeded—he was a little bul his remarks on this—and fill in the details a little as the size of funding, the percentage grant ar subvention that might be permissible within the regime, that would be helpful and might justify w called the fruits of the long battle that are now in

We welcome the extension of the powers but we c the flogging off of the yards. Is the Minister stand the statement that if the military yards do not find —of which Yarrow is already on the market ar others about to be so—those yards will be closed need a clear answer on that tonight. We believe th should stay in the public sector. We are opposed to being flogged off, but even more are we opposed to being closed if buyers are not found.

We want to know where the money has gone be the military and civil businesses and between the v categories of investment. We want to know the fo order load for the civil yards that remain within Shipbuilders after the haphazard auction has reach lamentable end. We want to know precisely whe 200,000 CGRT has been found. If the Minister can in on the negotiations with the Commission, that wo helpful.

12.57 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): As the hon. M for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) said, thi extends the borrowing powers of British Shipbuilde no one would wish to oppose that.

Some questions arise to which I hope the Minist reply. Given one or two of the matters upon wh touched, one wonders to what extent the requirem additional borrowing is related to the Government's of privatisation. It appears that there may be cont investment in yards that are to be sold, which will to be funded. More specifically, there will be the f on consequences of the Scott Lithgow deal.

As some hon. Members may recall, I was critical deal when it was struck — not because I objec principle to the yard moving from British Shipbuil the private sector, but because of the terms in which taking place, namely, that the price paid was ext low and the guarantees remaining on the public appeared to be open-ended and rather high. I ho

when the Minister replies he will say what commitment will have to be met by the public sector on the Scott Lithgow yard. Some of us think that it might be a substantial sum.

I shall confine myself to the Scottish yards. The bids that have apparently come in for Yarrow and Hall Russell are clearly different from what was envisaged. The joint management buyer fell through. While I appreciate that the Minister is not in a position to disclose the details, can he reiterate a previous assurance that the Hall Russell yard will be sold as a shipyard? He knows the strength of feeling in the city about that. It would be welcome if the Minister could say tonight, first, whether any offer he has on the table is likely to prove acceptable and, secondly, if it is that he will ensure that as far as the Government can reasonably guarantee the shipyard will continue to be a shipyard and will not be sold for any other purpose. It has, in private and public ownership, been a successful and profitable yard and it is the wish of the local community that it should continue to be so.

I do not want to labour the point, but it is worth reiterating that people who do not know the local economy in Aberdeen tend to think we are happy with the fact the we have oil. We are, and it has given us a level of unemployment which other areas might envy, although 10 years ago any other part of the country would have regarded 7·5 per cent. unemployment as a disaster.

Nevertheless, the traditional industries in Aberdeen are being squeezed out by the oil industry. If this shipyard went as a yard, that would be seen as a psychological and practical blow to traditional industries in the locality, industries which the community is anxious to sustain, especially as the yard has been efficient, successful, flexible and profitable. It would be most regrettable if the net effect of privatisation was to prevent that from continuing.

We welcome the fact that some additional orders have gone to British Shipbuilders. To the extent that the Government can make any positive statements to the effect that they feel—we can differ if we consider that they are not right—that British Shipbuilders is coming out of the doldrums, if that turn out to be true, it will be welcomed. Many of us requires much more to happen before we shall be convinced that progess is really taking place.

Some questions remain unanswered about the increase. For example, is it simply and extension of what has been going on? Is it real money going into the shipbuilding industry to strengthen it, or is it transitional money which will benefit private owners who take over some of the yards? We have seen to much from the Government of public money going in to prop up assets which have subsequently been sold off at a low price to benefit, one can crudely say, friends of the Government, people who do not give a proportionate return to the taxpayer.

One is still left with a feeling of concern lest some of the deals which are still outstanding and which British Shipbuilders will have to pick up may prove expensive. That is part of the reason, one suspects, why the Government are having to increase the limit.

Those who wish to see British Shipbuilders restructured, to see the industry successful and to see the Government pursuing a proper shipping and order placement policy welcome any move that is likely to make for improvements in that direction. I hope that the Minister realises that simply presenting an order — which, of course, we shall not oppose—does not mean that we are convinced that the Government's policy is on the right track.

Despite the general and blatant political points that I have made, I hope that my questions about Scott Lithgow and Hall Russell will be answered and that assurances will be given. That will be welcomed by many people outside the House, who will be concerned if the Minister is unable to give those assurances tonight.

1.3 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I shall not delay the House unduly at this late hour. However, this instrument provides an opportunity for hon. Members with constituency interests in the shipbuilding industry to make representations to the Government. In particular, it is an opportunity for those of us who wish to see the industry preserved to question the Government on their overall approach and on recent developments in the industry. I shall not go over old ground. There are some new points about which I wish to probe the Minister.

In the past the Opposition have not opposed orders designed to raise the limit on British Shipbuilders' borrowing powers, and we shall not oppose this one. However, with privatisation looming for the greater part of what is left of the industry—the warship yards—we have a duty to seek from the Government details of what the extra money is required for and how they intend to recoup the taxpayers' money that is being spent on the warship yards that are due for privatisation.

Prior to nationalisation, a major cause of the difficulties in the industry was lack of investment because the private sector preferred to take its profit rather than reinvest. It would be ironic if the end result of nationalisation was that public funds had been used to make up for the failure of the private sector to invest, only to have the recapitalised industry handed back to the private sector on advantageous terms.

Everything depends upon the actual terms of privatisation. I understand why the Minister has to be reticent on the specific details at the moment, but the Government have a duty to safeguard public investment in the shipbuilding industry and to make sure that the nation gets a proper return on its investment.

I was disappointed that the Minister did not refer specifically to the increase in borrowing limits. The order does not deal with the difficulty that shipyard workers who will be made redundant after December 1986 will face. These will be the workers who have stood by the industry and have not taken the opportunity to sell their jobs. They will be forced out of the industry by closure, without full severance payments if that closure comes after the end of 1986.

It would be wrong for the Government to leave matters as they stand, because a section of the shipbuilding community will be treated unfairly. The injustice will be made worse because workers deprived of accumulated entitlements will have no means of preventing their redundancy. Indeed, these will be the workers who are now sticking by a low-paid industry and doing everything possible to save their jobs. I do not think that the House would want to treat shipyard workers in such a shoddy way.

If there are further redundancies after 1986 as a result of a downturn in naval orders by the Ministry of Defence, I think that it would be the will of the House—certainly

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

it would be the will of my right hon. and hon. Friends — that arrangements should be made to ensure that shipbuilding workers in that unfortunate position received their redundancy entitlement not just under the state scheme but also under the British Shipbuilders' scheme. It would be unfair if they were left without that sort of protection. The Minister should address himself to that eventuality and give an assurance that in those special circumstances the Government will be willing to act. That would be helpful.

Will the Minister also address himself to the status of warship yards that have work but are not privatised by March 1986? This is of considerable concern to the industry. I mentioned in the last debate that the Minister of State had said that the warship yards were to be sold or closed. Is that still the Government's approach, or are they saying that these yards will be alienated from public ownership on a subsidised basis, or will they be kept in the public sector in a disadvantaged way until the work runs out, or are the Government still considering — as was mooted last summer by the Secretary of State — the launch of a private limited company to accommodate yards for which there has been no other private bid by the time the privatisation date that they have set approaches?

Yards such as Cammell Laird and Swan Hunter have a substantial tradition of doing merchant work. Swan Hunter in particular has built up a record of producing specialised merchant vessels, and it is still in that market. If it is asked to go over to warship building as its only function, it will lose a source of work for its men and a source of revenue for the privatised company. Does the Minister see any future for Swan Hunter in merchant work, especially for specialised vessels, where European yards can still be competitive? I have in mind the launch of the cable laying vessel, which has only recently left the Tyne. That is the sort of work that Swan Hunter will want to compete for, and it should have the opportunity to do so.

If the Government adopt the method of subsidising merchant shipbuilding for which I think they will opt, which will mean giving a cash subsidy to British Shipbuilders and saying, in effect, "This is your subsidy for merchant shipbuilding", it will be for BS to decide how that money will be spent across its merchant yards. Mixed yards such as Swans, which are supposed to be treated like warship yards, would be cut off from effective subsidy for merchant orders. As we have said repeatedly in these debates, there is no free market in merchant shipbuilding. Every merchant shipbuilding economy needs state support. It is the position of yards such as Swans that I wish to probe.

If the Government intend to adopt a different approach in subsidising British merchant shipbuilding — for example, one that takes into account the social consequences of unemployment, the work force that is employed or the pragmatic order-to-order subsidy rather than a fixed sum—it will be helpful if the Minister will say so now, so that the position is clear for all those who have responsibility for future planning in the industry.

Swan Hunter has been promised a type 23 frigate order. I ask the Minister to give an assurance that it will not be as long delayed as the orders for type 22s. The Type 23 order will be crucial for the employment programme at Swans. If the yard does not receive the order in time, there are bound to be further redundancies on Tyneside. I shall not rehearse all the arguments about why the region sh not have to bear the present burden of unemployme am sure that the Minister is aware that it is a region of high unemployment and that it does not want to carry additional burden of further shipbuilding redundanci

The Minister has whetted my appetite and that of hon. Friends by talking about the new aid regime to r competition from the far east. It is something that is gi him new hope. It seems that it will deal at last with im penetration and I understand why the Minister ca reveal to much at this stage. If what he has outlined co to pass, it will be welcome. I only hope that it will come too late for the industry and that it will provid effective barrier to unfair overseas competition, especi from the far east. I hope also that it will prevent annihilation of our merchant shipbuilding markets result of dramatic import penetration. I wish the Min well in his endeavours if he is genuinely taking that p

1.13 am

Mr. Butcher: First, I thank the hon. Member Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) for his endo ment of the objectives behind this measure. I unders that there is unanimity in the House that we should proc in the way that has been outlined. I can assure him th all the recent shipbuilding orders are covered, in the m by the intervention fund, they have taken that sub forward automatically into next year's build program We would not have next year's build programme if t had not been the intervention fund support which Graham Day has used so imaginatively in scouring world for orders.

I shall restate briefly what we are about tonight. order raises the borrowing limit of British Shipbuilder £100 million to £1,200 million. It gives BS the autho to borrow from the Government or elsewhere up to limit. In practice, the funding involved is primarily pu dividend capital plus certain Government loans associ with the modernisation of Vickers and tempo borrowing from either the national loans fund or market. It does not apply to payments under intervention fund. The proceeds from the sale of warship yards will be allowed for, but we are looking at net EFL, even allowing for the proceeds of Obviously, I shall not disclose the exact figure tonigh it could prejudice what we are looking at, but it wil about £36 million.

We are introducing the order now because, by the of March, British Shipbuilders will be approachin current limit of £1,100 million. As I have explained expect receipts from the sale of warship yards in 198 to hold net borrowing in that year to the March 1985 l But the timing of the receipts will be critical, and that be another factor in relation to Scott Lithgow. Clearl is essential that we make provision now for borro which may arise in the early part of the year if receipts do not, as is likely, match expenditure on a mo by-month basis. Moreover, we still await the settleme the completion of accounts relating to the sale of Lithgow. It is clearly prudent to make provision fo costs which may arise.

In my opening remarks, I told the House of bot radical restructuring which British Shipbuilders undergone since we last introduced a borrowing order, and the recent new order success that this brought. After virtually a year without new orders, d

which we have had a number of sombre and depressing debates, it gives the House pleasure to be able to participate in a debate on the first successes of the revamped British Shipbuilders.

As ever, many questions have been asked. In the financial year 1984-85, British Shipbuilders expects to spend more than £100 million on capital expenditure, of which £51 million is for the modernisation of Vickers. The balance will go to the other yards. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West asked about future work projections. In 1985-86, British Shipbuilders plans to spend about £130 million, of which £60 million will be on the modernisation of Vickers. In both years, capital expenditure on merchant shipbuilding will be running at about £20 million.

The hon. Gentleman also asked for a breakdown of the £1·23-ish billion which we are now contemplating. I have answered that question in great detail in past debates, and I therefore accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation to let him have the updated detail in writing.

At the time Scott Lithgow was sold in March 1984, the financial reconstruction of the company, which comprised part of the deal, was done on the basis of provisional and unaudited accounts. This was documented in British Shipbuilders' annual accounts for 1983-84 and fully explained in evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry in July 1984 by both British Shipbuilders and its auditors.

Finalising the completion accounts has proved a complex business. The auditors of British Shipbuilders and of Trafalgar House are still deeply involved in negotiations. I understand that the principal item at issue is the provision made in March 1984 for the costs of completing the BP rig. Under the terms of the deal, British Shipbuilders retained responsibility for this rig. In the event it took far longer to complete than originally estimated. British Shipbuilders and Trafalgar House are therefore negotiating over who should bear the extra completion costs involved, and over a number of other issues relating to the accounts.

I must stress, however, that any costs which may arise from the BP rig will not bear upon the original decision to sell the yard. It was always clear that the BP rig was so far advanced that it only made sense to complete it—and the costs would thus have arisen whether the yard was retained in British Shipbuilders, closed or sold.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) displayed a laudable concern for yards outside his constituency and referred to the implications for Scott Lithgow. Having spent some time last week in that yard, I detect a new atmosphere there. The workers are committed. My only regret, from having walked around a couple of the car parks, is that it appeared that about 35 per cent. of the cars parked there were of foreign manufacture. Although we had a rather whimsical exchange with the shop stewards on that particular morning, they could perhaps have pressed me to a deal if they eliminated that form of purchasing to allow for a totally British purchasing policy on behalf of British ship owners. That was a deal I could not deliver, but it was an interesting exchange.

On the question of Swan Hunter and merchant work, there is nothing now, of course, to prevent Swan Hunter's from seeking merchant work while it is in the corporation. What happens afterwards will depend on the new owners. As the chairman of British Shipbuilders has pointed out, Swan Hunter lost a lot of money on the Atlantic Conveyor in spite of the subsidy that the ship received. I noted very carefully what the hon. Gentleman said about the type 23 frigate; and I will, of course, communicate his concern to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence so that the invitation to that yard to be up to scratch to justify the placing of that order in those circumstances is complied with.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West asked a question about the 200,000 compensated consolidated gross registered tonnes applying only to yards not to be privatised. The 200,000 compensated gross registered tonnes target is for merchant orders. None of the yards to be privatised has a merchant workload at present, nor do any have any immediate prospects of merchant work. I hope that the hon. Gentleman finds some reassurance in that.

We were then asked to clarify our position with regard to negotiations with the Commission. I am afraid that I have to avoid the invitation of the hon. Gentleman to be more specific. He has been in business himself and he knows that one does not go into a negotiating position declaring one's bottom line to those with whom one is negotiating. However, I can say, if he wishes me to use a different adjective, that we are looking for a substantial increase in the current rate of intervention fund, not least because, as hon. Gentlemen have noted, we are concerned to see that we match the far east competition.

On the breakdown of the subsidy from the Government, I did undertake to write to the hon. Gentleman and to give an update on what is now probably going to be in excess of the £1,200 million support figure. British Shipbuilders' workload next year, as I said earlier, will consist almost entirely of the orders they have got this year under IF support.

On the question raised on privatisation, we hope and believe that we shall be able to sell all the warship yards. We have not even anticipated that it will not prove possible to do so. We have not, therefore, considered what would happen to the yards if they were not sold.

I have not forgotten the hon. Gentleman's question about Hall Russell. It is our hope and wish, as we have said before, that it will be sold as a shipbuilder, but that depends on the bidders that come in for that particular order. We have given the strongest hint possible that we too would regret the lapsing of that sort of capability on that site.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I would like to press the point I raised about the position of shipyard workers in warship yards who are made redundant after the expiry of the British Shipbuilders redundancy scheme at the end of 1986 through no fault of their own but because, for example, to give the most obvious reason, of a further downturn in the ordering requirements of the Ministry of Defence and there not being enough work to fill all the yards. If those workers who have stuck by the industry were to be made compulsorily redundant through no fault of their own, under present circumstances they would be disadvantaged. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman could at least give an assurance that the Government, in those specific circumstances, would look sympathetically at the position of the men and the possibility of compensating them for the substantial loss, amounting in some cases to 50 per cent. or even 60 per cent., of their redundancy entitlement.

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman may recall that we had a long debate on this in the past. I think we made it

[Mr. Butcher]

very clear that after the expiry of the shipbuilding redundancy scheme, as debated and approved in the House recently, it would be up to the successor privatised yard, if it was privatised by then, to have a follow-on scheme. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that in similar circumstances in the past, when yards have passed from the public to the private sector, there has been a compensatory element of payment to the workers who have passed into the private sector. Negotiations have taken place, and some have been more generous than others. Thus the "rights" to the levels of redundancy payment enjoyed in British Shipbuilders are taken account of, but are no longer pertinent once the company has gone into the private sector.

I should like to send the hon. Gentleman details of four such deals done in the past. He may care to take his lead from them. He may rest assured that there is not a chasm, in terms of support, into which people fall. A number of compromises have been available.

I commend the order to the House.

1.26 am

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

I thank the Minister for the further information. It will not come as any surprise to him that it is disconcerting to see so little capital investment going into the civilian side. That only confirms our worst forebodings.

We welcome the fact that the Minister said that the compensatory gross registered tonnage was indeed for those yards. However, one year forward is not a great deal of forward order coverage, given that the Government have plunged the industry into a further period of great uncertainty.

The Minister then let slip a figure of £36 million. Is that figure for the proceeds that he expects from the immediate sales of the warship yards that are put on the market? Did he say that the proceeds from the sales would be credited to BS, and would thus benefit BS in addition to the increase in the borrowing facility that he is making available? If that is the case, we shall not press him as far as the Commission is concerned. However, we shall look very carefully at whatever deal he eventually comes to the House with, and we shall want to be assured that it is as substantial as he claims.

With great respect to the Minister, the Secretary of State and to the officials, it is about time that they gave some thought to the situation that they are putting themselves in of utter distress sales. It is not good enough to say that they have not thought about what they will do if they cannot flog off those yards. Will they give them away, pay people to take them, or close them? If Ministers cannot answer that question tonight, it is time that they had a clear-cut policy saying that those yards that are completing their orders will be left within BS, and that their managements will fall within its area of competence, and that they will be allowed to complete them.

We should like the Minister to come back to the House on those points. We cannot welcome the Government's policy towards the industry, and oppose that policy in every conceivable respect. But we welcome the order in that it enables the industry to continue, albeit in an unsatisfactory state and towards an uncertain future. In the circumstances, there is nothing that we can do but accept the order and to hope that the industry will have a better future than the Government seem to envisage. We shall follow the industry's progress, and the progress of the sales over the next months with great trepidation, and I fear that we shall be debating these issues before long as the Government's auction proceeds. But for the moment we shall let the order go through without a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 13th February, be approved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Companies Bill *[Lords]*, the Company Securities (Insider Dealings) Bill *[Lords]*, and the Business Names Bill *[Lords]*, Notices of Amendments, new Clauses, and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Independent Schools (Local Authority Facilities)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

1.29 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): My hon. Friends and I wish to bring to the attention of the House and the Government an injustice. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science has agreed that my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) should be permitted to speak during the debate. The matter is causing deep anxiety throughout the county. We are using our position as Members of Parliament in the most classical way possible, that is, to appeal for justice for our constituents. We want to know what the Government propose to do to defend children in Nottinghamshire against the petty, spiteful and cruel actions of the Labour party—the majority party—on Nottinghamshire county council and its education committee. The decisions of that committee have rightly received both local and national publicity.

The committee decided that no child who attends a school in the independent sector should make use of the council's facilities. That applies to school milk, swimming pools, swimming lessons, playing fields, music colleges, the county orchestra and band, the drama workshops, the summer residential workshop and even the Saturday morning junior schools at two colleges of further education. The decision was supposedly made on principles.

The *Nottingham Evening Post* has been making a powerful case. It states:

"Education Committee chairman Fred Riddell made it quite clear: 'Private schools are a divisive factor in education and give special privileges and unfair starts entirely unconnected with merit or need,' he said.

The *Post* respects entirely the right of people to hold that view but we reckon the policy itself is cruel and misguided because it hits politically innocent children and that's not a fair fight."

That sums up the feeling of the people of Nottinghamshire. It has certainly been reflected in the letters that I have received on the subject, the majority of which have come not from those directly affected, but from people who are struck by the unfairness and injustice of the decision.

Because of the public outrage in Nottingham the education committee has had to water down its policy a little, for example, for music. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South wishes to speak about that. One set of parents went to court and obtained an injunction stopping the adoption of a recommendation that affects 30 pupils. That is a minor number compared with the many pupils still affected.

The supposition that all parents of pupils who attend independent schools are wealthy is nonsense. Even if that were true, the policy is morally repugnant. Parents who can pay for their children's education pay for the other facilities through their rates and taxes, and pay for that education twice. The policy proves that policies based on hatred and envy are bound to have vindictive and callous consequences.

I shall give an example that will make that point clear and give the lie to the so-called justification that the decision is based on principle. Sutherland House is a privately owned non-profit making school for 28 autistic children. The fees are paid for by three education authorities, which make joint use of the school, because they do not make separate provision. That policy is correct. Nottingham county council pays for the fees of 18 of those children.

Even those handicapped children whose fees are paid for by the education committee are being denied access to swimming pools. What kind of principle is that? It declares war not only on children but even on handicapped children. Some friends of mine have an autistic child, and I know the damage that can be done, simply because of the nature of the handicap, by someone showing coldness and indifference. It is difficult enough to bring those children out, and the damage that could be caused to them by such a decision is outrageous. It makes my blood boil.

The people of Nottingham look to Her Majesty's Government to protect them against such petty, tyrannical decisions. The real question to the Minister is: does he have any power? If it is not made clear that Parliament will not tolerate such actions, I predict that they will spread to every Left-wing Labour education authority in the country. If people think that I exaggerate, they should consider what has happened with local government finance. They cannot say that this will be confined to one county. We have a duty to make it clear that some actions plumb the depths of moral turpitude and cannot be tolerated. This is one such action. We ask for — we demand — action against those who declare war on children.

1.36 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I support my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) in this debate. There are two elements of principle involved. First and foremost, all the parents of the children in Nottinghamshire contribute through their rates to the services and facilities which are enjoyed, only in a reasonable way, by the private sector. Children in the state sector have not been denied the use of playing fields, swimming pools and other facilities when they required them. Schools which do not have such facilities have been able to use others by the use of sensible timetables. I was a member of the education authority that was responsible for introducing joint-use facilities. Our philosophy was that it was an intelligent use of resources to develop the community use of capital equipment in our comprehensive schools to the maximum possible. That means that they must be used by all the children who are not in the public sector, because they have been provided way in excess of the minimum demands of the state sector.

I wish to make a special case for music. Of all the spiritual and developing sciences, music is the one that knows no class barriers. The ability to play musical instruments is not restricted, and cannot be defined within a rigid state sector. It is incredible to think that young musicians, from whatever background, and from all sectors of education in Nottinghamshire, cannot come together and continue to provide what has been the jewel in the crown of Nottinghamshire education—the county youth orchestra, which has given untold pleasure to many people who have attended its concerts in the county and in the Royal Albert Hall. Who knows when one listens to an orchestra what the background is of the child who plays the flute, the oboe or the violin, and who cares anyway?

[Mr. Jim Lester]

What matters is that those young people play together and excel in the presentation of the finest and most sophisticated art in our culture. The idea of this narrow, mean, arbitrary decision that children cannot come together on the basis of their ability to combine and play the great works of music defies description.

There should be—if there is not, the Minister should tell us—a legal way for the parents or the Government to define the use of facilities which are paid for through the rates and which, therefore, should be available to all the children of Nottinghamshire, based purely on their talents, not on the school which they happen to attend.

1.40 am

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I shall be brief, since my hon. Friends have already highlighted this nasty, vindictive Socialism against innocent children in Nottinghamshire whose parents have exercised their democratic rights and have chosen to educate their children outside the maintained sector.

Parents of children at independent schools pay their rates and taxes like anyone else. They pay, as residents of Nottinghamshire, for the maintained schools, the libraries, swimming pools, parks, sports fields and everything else, as much as other ratepayers. It is petty, stupid and a mistaken class hatred to deny children who attend independent schools access to facilities within the state schools. Let us not forget that the independent schools make their facilities available to children from state schools, often at no charge.

The Labour-controlled council is saying, "We can play in your garden, but you cannot play in ours." The facilities which were withdrawn were available to all—I think of free milk—or on the basis of talent for a given course like those provided by music schools. The results from those schools have given us the internationally renowned Nottinghamshire county concert band and the Nottinghamshire county youth orchestra which have given pleasure to thousands of people at home and abroad.

If the Socialists are out to destroy that fine record, how far do they intend to take their vendetta? Will the children next be denied access to libraries and other public facilities maintained by ratepayers and taxpayers just because their parents choose to pay for their schooling personally?

The implementation of this callous policy against children will save only £1,800 according to the figures supplied by the county treasurer. Does the Labour-controlled council not recognise that the parents of a child being educated in the private sector have already contributed on average over £1,000 each to the state maintained sector? In Nottinghamshire, totals £6 million.

A divisive policy against children to save £1,800 must rank as the lowest form of Socialism around. It has already sunk to a pretty low depth in other directions. However, the electors of Nottinghamshire will have the opportunity in May to reject this Labour-controlled council and all that it stands for.

A final thought. How would the Labour council cope if all the parents of children at independent schools exercised their democratic right in the other direction, and sent their children to maintained schools? Let the finance officers work that one out.

1.44 am

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On 15 January I tabled a question in answer to which the Minister told me that the Government deplored such discrimination and that under existing legislation they would take action if they were satisfied that any authority was acting "unreasonably" in the sense that that word had been interpreted in the courts. No one can doubt that judgment in respect of Nottingham, in view of my hon. Friends' remarks and of the mass of representations made to the Minister on which I hope that he will comment.

I had cause previously to speak in somewhat uncomplimentary terms of the chairman of the Nottinghamshire education committee. On this occasion, I think that Councillor Frederick Riddell has surpassed himself. Rich as our language is, I can find no adjective to describe him that will be allowed under our rigid parliamentary language rules. So politically motivated is the decision that the councillor, not the director of education, has signed the reports placed before the county council.

The new rules are a catalogue of vindictive acts against children whose only crime appears to be that their parents have decided, after paying all their dues and taxes that they dare, with what is left, send their children to a private school. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) pointed out, not all parents pay. The daughter of one of my constituents has a free place at a Nottingham school. That girl is severely disabled, and her one great joy is music. The degree of caring of that Labour authority is such that she was to be thrown out of the orchestra. The authority has now relented.

It is still true that private pupils who are not currently members of the music schools will not now be permitted to apply to those schools. They will be precluded also from applying for auditions for the county orchestra or concert band. The parents are prepared to commence proceedings, if they must, against the Nottinghamshire county council on the basis that, while there is no duty on the county council to provide music schools, if it does, the council must exercise that duty reasonably. No reasonable county council reasonably advised could take the decision that Nottinghamshire county council has taken.

There are 30 privately educated pupils in the 762 playing places in the four schools of music; 36 privately educated pupils in the 310 special tuition places; three private school pupils among the 82 members of the orchestra, and five private school pupils among the 75 members of the band. All those places are won on excellence and audition.

The parents of those private school students would have grounds for calling for a judicial review on the administrative decision. I put it to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that parents should not have to do this themselves—we are here to plead for them and to defend their rights.

This action towards music is not the only crass act of this Labour council. A school in my constituency has used the adjacent playing field for 50 years. The school currently pays £4 an hour for the use of that pitch. A school in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East pays £1,000 a year for the use of a swimming pool. The county council has said that it will save £1,800 by its decision on music, but it has forgotten to tell the ratepayers of the fees that it will lose from the

playing fields and the swimming pools. Those losses will swamp the gain. It is a paltry gain for so nasty a policy. As for the policy maker, they did not call him "Flogger Fred" as a schoolmaster for nothing.

My colleagues are concerned about the knock-on effect in other counties. We believe that democracy does not imply the dismissal of minority views and interests. If the local authority cannot temper its dogma with some common sense, it is the duty of this place to do it.

1.48 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) obtained this Adjournment debate, because it gives me the opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to his efforts in representing the interests of his constituents. I have noted the points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, East, for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) about the actions of the Nottinghamshire local education authority in withdrawing a range of local authority facilities and provisions from pupils at independent schools. I accept that they, like many of their constituents, feel strongly about the matters they have raised. I shall do my best to respond as far as possible to the various aspects of this case in the time I have available.

I hear and take very seriously the strong outpourings of indignation and indeed outrage which have been expressed to me, not only here tonight by my hon. Friends but in letters from parents of children at independent schools in Nottingham. Those parents have expressed their annoyance and indignation to me in the strongest of terms. In response to my hon. Friends and to parents, this Adjournment debate provides me with the opportunity of explaining how matters stand.

Before I do that, however, I think that this would be an appropriate point for me to explain the Secretary of State's role in matters of this sort. Essentially it is to examine them, once they have been brought to his attention by means of a complaint or in some other way, to see whether they call for any action on his part under powers conferred on him by sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944. Those sections relate to the exercise of powers and duties conferred by or under the Education Acts. The first relates to situations where an LEA may have exercised its powers or duties unreasonably; the second to matters where the LEA may actually be in default.

When dealing with such matters, we must begin by identifying the statutory powers or duties which are involved. In the present case, for example, we need to define the powers or duties under which Nottinghamshire has been providing the services now being withdrawn or under threat of withdrawal. That in itself is not straightforward with regard to the matters raised by my hon. Friend, because we are dealing not with one service provided under one power or duty, but a variety of different services provided under a number of different statutory provisions. Secondly, it is for the Secretary of State to establish whether his powers under section 68 or section 99 or both are relevant. Section 99 would apply where an LEA was in breach of its Education Act duties, whereas section 68 relates to the unreasonable performance of an authority's duties under the Act or the unreasonable exercise of powers under the Education Act.

It may be helpful if I clarify one point here. The Secretary of State's powers enable him to investigate on "unreasonableness" grounds whether the action of the authority involves a decision to go ahead and do something new, or to stop something being done, or to vary the manner in which it is being done.

During the debate tonight, my hon. Friends have left me in no doubt that they think the Nottinghamshire authority has acted unreasonably. But here we are dealing not with what the ordinary man or woman would call unreasonable, but with what the law regards as unreasonable, since "unreasonableness" is a legal term of art. To fall within this expression it must be conduct which no sensible authority acting with due appreciation of its responsibilities would have decided to adopt.

Having established those matters, my right hon. Friend has then to investigate the authority's actions. It is this point which we have now reached, and officials are seeking from the authority a detailed account of the decisions it has reached and the reasons which lay behind those decisions.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am sure that I am not alone when I say that my colleagues and I are being drowned by the legal jargon. I appreciate the difficulty, but if from 9 o'clock until 5 o'clock Monday to Friday a swimming pool is reserved by the LEA and during a period when the local authority is not using the pool a private school rents and pays for the time, would it not seem to be unreasonable to refuse to rent the swimming pool to it?

Mr. Dunn: That is why my Department is conducting investigations with the authority. Once the complaints procedure has been started—which, as my hon. Friend knows, it has—it is a matter for investigation. I shall return to that point later in another context.

As soon as my right hon. Friend has received and considered the comments and documentary evidence that we have requested from Nottingham and has satisfied himself that he has sufficient information to enable him to form a view about the legality of Nottinghamshire's actions, he will conclude whether there is any evidence of unreasonable action or of a breach of statutory duties.

My hon. Friends referred to the activities about which their constituents have complained to them. Several activities are involved—school orchestras, school milk, in-service training, swimming pools and playing fields, drama workshops, Saturday classes and the withdrawal of certain facilities provided by public libraries to teachers from independent schools. On the latter point, since the transfer of functions to the Office of Arts and Libraries, this matter is for that Department and not for the Department of Education and Science. The Office of Arts and Libraries is pursuing that point separately.

My hon. Friends tonight have left me in no doubt that in their view this catalogue adds up to a policy decision on the part of the Nottinghamshire authority that has been taken for purely political reasons. I hope that my hon. Friends will understand, however, if at this stage I offer no particular view on the merits of the case that they have argued. That I do not do so is a measure of how seriously my right hon. Friend and I are treating the matters about which they complain. We are vigorously considering whether Nottinghamshire education authority has acted unreasonably in the exercise of its powers and duties, or is in default of the duties laid on it by the Education Acts.

[Mr. Dunn]

To that end, as I have already explained, we are seeking answers from the authority to enable my right hon. Friend to reach conclusions on that matter, as before he can do so he must satisfy himself that he has sufficient information to enable him to do so. However, my right hon. Friend is exercising powers given to him by the 1944 Act and, until such time as he is able to reach his conclusion, he is in a quasi-judicial role.

However, I fully recognise that the children and the parents of children at independent schools have had to face three months of uncertainty as to whether the various provisions that they have enjoyed in the past will continue to be available to them in the future. We are therefore treating these complaints as a matter of priority, and my meeting with Nottinghamshire Members later this week will no doubt be of further help in clarifying the issues involved. The Department and I will do our utmost to ensure that the parents and children have the Secretary of State's conclusions as soon as we possibly can.

It would be remiss of me if, in conclusion, I did not thank my hon. Friends for bringing this problem to the attention of the House in a robust fashion.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

VALERIE MARY HILL AND ALAN MONK (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Honda Company (Swindon Site)

1. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the Honda company concerning engine manufacture and full car production at its Swindon site; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Lamont): My Department holds discussions with Honda from time to time, as with any other potential inward investor in the United Kingdom. Such discussions are commercially confidential.

Mr. Hughes: What is the Minister doing to protect the interests of British Leyland, bearing in mind all the money that has been invested in that firm and all the jobs that are involved? If Honda is allowed to engage in car production, will the Minister ensure that there is a high level of local content? Will the Minister state whether Honda will be allowed to import built-up cars, as some other multinationals are doing? Finally, what is the Minister doing about the location? Why does he not persuade Honda to go to a development area, or has his bargaining power been undermined by the changes in regional aid?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman will have read in the newspapers that Honda has publicly stated that it has as yet no firm plans either for an engine making plant or full car production in the United Kingdom. If Honda or any other Japanese or foreign company were to think of investing in the United Kingdom and approached the Government about it, one of the facts that we would consider would be the effect that it would have on producers in the United Kingdom. That would also influence any decision about assistance towards a plant in a development area, or any of the assisted areas. We would certainly consider the effect on existing producers.

Mr. Roger King: Will my hon. Friend consider extremely carefully any proposal that may come from companies, such as Honda, to produce vehicles in the United Kingdom, bearing in mind the over-capacity in the European manufacturing network, which is further exacerbated by the intention of Nissan to increase its output to 200,000 units a year, and the fact that any additional capacity must have a grave effect on the employment prospects in the existing motor industry?

Mr. Lamont: Obviously, we would take into account what my hon. Friend says about capacity. That is what I meant when I replied to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) about the effect on existing producers. We would also consider the degree of United Kingdom content that was to be in any project, exactly as we did for the Nissan plant. I hope that hon. Members will not go overboard about the matter. If a company wishes to come to the United Kingdom, does not want a Government grant, is not going to an assisted area and wants to invest some of its own money in manufacturing capacity, we do not have the power to stop it coming. It might think it rather odd if we tried.

Mr. Williams: The Minister has just sought to reassure the House, but we, too, want to be sure that he will give adequate consideration to the needs and interests of existing car and component manufacturers in the United Kingdom. Will he bear in mind that as this matter comes so soon after the massive cut of £300 million a year in regional aid, it would be seen as a massive betrayal of the areas of highest unemployment if he used section 8 of the Industry Act 1972 to give comparable or better terms to such an employer to go outside assisted areas?

Mr. Lamont: We have not been approached for assistance either inside or outside an assisted area, and so the question does not arise. If the question of aid did arise, as I have already said twice, we would take into account the effect on existing manufacturers. However, I must stress to the House that if a person wants to invest hundreds of millions of pounds of his own money in new manufacturing capacity in the United Kingdom, the decision is essentially for him, although obviously we shall take those factors into account.

Protectionism

2. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he intends that Britain should take internationally to curb protectionism.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): The United Kingdom, through the European Commission, challenges protectionist measures in other countries and upholds its rights under the GATT. We support proposals for a new GATT round which will play an important role in reinforcing the open trading system. We also press for freer trade in our regular bilateral contacts with other Governments.

Mr. Howarth: I welcome my right hon. Friend's robust support of free trade, but what advice—equally robust, I hope—would he give to those in the United States currently advocating a 20 per cent. import surcharge to cope with balance of payment problems?

Mr. Tebbit: It would be most regrettable if United States industry sought to solve difficulties made in the United States at the expense of the rest of the world. The

United States steel industry, in particular, has some way to go in changing certain rigidities and methods of doing business.

Mr. Park: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that not all countries take such an upright approach as he does and that this operates to the detriment of our exporters?

Mr. Tebbit: Few Governments and few people take such an upright approach as I do, but it usually pays in the long run.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend consider taking steps to protect horse riders in this country by banning the import of non-BSI-approved riding hats?

Mr. Tebbit: My hon. Friend raises a mildly esoteric point. Unusually for me, I should like notice of the matter and will write to my hon. Friend about it.

Mr. Ashdown: Was the proposed 20 per cent. import surcharge discussed by the Prime Minister on her recent visit to Washington, and, if so, what were the results? If British goods were to be covered by the surcharge, would that not be further proof that the Prime Minister's visit to Washington was more an ego trip for herself than of any benefit to Britain?

Mr. Tebbit: The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that whenever he gets to his feet he is on an ego trip. If he had listened to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday he would know that she raised with the United States Administration the threat of protectionism. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate, however, that even in the perhaps somewhat overheated atmosphere of last year's election in the United States the President and the Administration were robust in resisting calls for protectionism, and I hope that they will remain so.

Mr. Hanley: I welcome my right hon. Friend's initiative in trying to get another round of GATT talks going, but is he aware that there is increasing protectionism in the United States and the suggestion of almost Socialist limits on imports and financial quotas? As with unilateral disarmament, will my right hon. Friend avoid throwing away the one area in which our own exporters can achieve some protection by imposing such measures on others?

Mr. Tebbit: I am not a believer in unilateral disarmament in this or any other matter, but there is a clear need for a great deal of disarmament in the matter of protectionism. I hope that we shall continue to be able to persuade the United States that its own interests, as much as those of the rest of the world, lie in free trade.

Coal Industry Dispute

3. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much it has cost to import oil and coal into Britain during the present coal industry dispute; and from which countries these imports have come.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1984, imports of coal and oil amounted to £8·8 billion. Figures for each country are published in the December edition of *Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom*.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister think that the CEGB is acting legally in running up a £2 billion debt, and how does it intend to finance that enormous deficit? Does he agree that the issue should be debated in Parliament on the basis of figures provided by the Government rather than leaks in the press?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Lady well knows, issues concerning the CEGB are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I shall not comment on other issues related to the miners' strike, save to express the hope that the hon. Lady will add her voice to those urging a return to work to get this ghastly strike over.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Would my hon. Friend care to speculate on the cost to British industry of the restrictions imposed on the CEGB for many years with regard to coal imports, and on how many jobs have been lost in British industry because British coal is far too expensive?

Mr. Lamont: Obviously we need an internationally competitive coal industry. Matters such as the CEGB and the coal industry are for my rght hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Barron: Is the Minister aware that in the last 12 months, because of the dollar-sterling exchange rate, the price of coal imported into Britain for industry has increased by nearly 50 per cent.? Is he further aware that many pits which have been classified by the Government as uneconomic could now be described as economic in view of that expensive imported coal?

Mr. Lamont: We do not want to have to import coal, and we want an internationally competitive coal industry. Opposition Members and Mr. Scargill and their friends seem determined not to protect but to destroy jobs in Britain and to protect the jobs of American, Australian and German coalminers, from whose countries we have had to import coal.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the aid that the Soviet Union has given to maintain the coal strike in this country has been the best investment that the Soviet Union could have made, as it has enabled it to sell us substantial quantities of coal that it would not otherwise have been able to do?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend has said. The fellow Socialist workers of the Soviet Union and Poland seem to have taken the maximum advantage of the situation, which they obviously do not see as a pre-revolutionary one.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister agree that the tragedy of the present dispute is that our balance of payments could have benefited enormously from increased coal exports had we had security of supply and an increasingly competitive industry, rather than one that is being dragged down at tha tail end by uneconomic pits that are making coal prices too high?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is 100 per cent. right. Inside our coal industry is a successful coal industry trying to get out. This country, with its enormous riches —300 years' supply of coal—should be exporting coal and using the coal industry as a wealth generator, not as a wealth consumer.

TUC (General Secretary)

4. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Tebbit: I met Trades Union Congress leaders, including the general secretary, on 12 March 1984 when the subjects discussed included industrial restructuring, Government support for research and development and regional policy, as well as industrial policy in the European Community.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is time that he met the general secretary of the TUC again? If he did, would he be able to explain why he has no plans to encourage jobs in mining communities, which, by their policies, the Government are out to destroy? Would he be able to tell him what hope exists for youngsters in areas such as mine, where 42 per cent. of all 25-year-olds are out of work? Would he be able to tell him what the prospects are for young miners whose only crime has been to have been on strike, to have pilfered morsels of coal and to have lost their jobs?

Mr. Tebbit: I am sure that if the TUC general secretary wishes to come and discuss those matters with me, he will get in touch with me. He has not yet done so, no doubt because he has been too busy trying to talk some sense into such an obdurate man as Mr. Scargill.

Mr. Hickmet: If my right hon. Friend has a further meeting with the leadership of the TUC, as he has been invited to do, will he invite Mr. Willis to try to talk some sense into the leaders of the railway unions so that the railways can start moving ore and steel into the steelworks of Britain, a situation which is continuing to cost the British Steel Corporation about £3·5 million a week? What effect does he think that this continuing policy will have on railwaymen's jobs?

Mr. Tebbit: It is clear that if the policy that has been pursued by some railwaymen of blacking coal trains were to continue, it would have a serious effect on the jobs of railwaymen and the finances of British Rail. It would probably be best, therefore, for the railwaymen whose jobs are being put at risk to have a word with their union leaders and put those leaders straight and remind them that their jobs are at risk unless they do what is in the interest of the membership.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: When the TUC met the Secretary of State and discussed regional policy, did it raise with him the proposal being studied by the Minister of State to reduce the grant-in-aid to the North of England Development Council by up to 30 per cent.? In view of the ever worsening employment figures in the north of England, does he not think that instead of reducing the grant he should increase it to allow for an additional promotional effort? Is it not high time he said to the Minister of State, "Knock it off, Norman, it is not on"?

Mr. Tebbit: I suppose that is something which could be said both ways these days between the general secretary and me—I do not know. The general secretary would indeed have had to be endowed with great gifts of prophecy had he raised the matter on 12 March 1984. In regard to the merits of the issue, if the general secretary wants to come and talk to me about the matter, he is free to ask to do so. Of course, what the hon. Gentleman should remember is that the amounts of money which have been made available for the purposes of which he speaks have been increased.

British Aerospace

5. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met British Aerospace representatives to discuss the future of the company.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I see the chairman of British Aerospace plc and his senior colleagues frequently.

Mr. Atkins: Does my hon. Friend not recognise that the future of the company will be in grave jeopardy if the European fighter aircraft project does not go ahead? Does he not agree that jobs in my constituency and in many other constituencies and the British aerospace industry as a whole will be affected adversely if something does not happen shortly? Does he not recognise that that would cost the Exchequer a great deal in lost tax and in the payment of more unemployment benefit? Does he not agree that it would be better to let the project go ahead and keep people at work?

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend no doubt knows that the Government and my Department in particular are fully aware of the issues he raises. The question is less one of when and whether the project will go forward, than of one in what form. That is what is occupying our attention at present.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Is the Minister aware of the difficulties that have arisen about selling the super 748 to the LIAT company? Is he aware that 10 countries wanted the 748, that the airline wanted it and that the Caribbean Bank wanted it, but that the European Commissioner said no? Will he ensure that the European Commissioner does not say no in future?

Mr. Pattie: I cannot give the House an undertaking that I can prevent any European Commissioner saying no in future. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the satisfactory outcome that appears to be in prospect in regard to that matter. The Government have offered support in the form of grant-aid from the aid trade provision representing 38 per cent. of the value of the British Aerospace bid. The balance of the contract price has been offered on normal terms.

Mr. Warren: Bearing in mind the way in which my hon. Friend is always keen to promote exports, will he consider the difficulties that beset British Aerospace, in that if it cannot get export credit guarantee cover for exporting, it should not be expected to pay a levy of 7·5 per cent. to the Ministry of Defence on a successful sale? Will he have words with his opposite number in the Ministry of Defence to try to introduce some rationale?

Mr. Pattie: These matters are frequently the subject of close exchanges between my right hon. Friends in the Ministry of Defence and our Department.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that British Aerospace is not dependent upon the award of the contract for the RAF basic trainer, whereas Short Bros in Belfast would be justified in having that contract, since it receives only 2 per cent. of defence work?

Mr. Pattie: I hope the hon. Gentleman and the House will agree that the prime consideration has to be the technical acceptability of the aeroplane for the needs of the Royal Air Force. Only when that has been assessed—that process has not yet been completed by the Ministry

of Defence—can consideration be given to any of the matters which the hon. Gentleman has rightly brought to the attention of the House.

Small Businesses

6. **Mr. Lightbown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will complete his Department's repackaging exercises on assistance to small businesses and publish the new literature.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. David Trippier): My hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology announced on 12 November 1984 that new arrangements for regrouping all the Department's assistance schemes would be introduced within five months. That remains our intention. We shall make a further announcement nearer the time when the change takes place.

Mr. Lightbown: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his repackaging and rescheduling of the programme. What are his future intentions for presentation?

Mr. Trippier: I should point out to my hon. Friend that I am paid. I am not paid enough, but I am paid. The presentation arrangements will be the subject of a detailed announcement before they are introduced. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in July 1984, they involve grouping the supportive measures of the Department of Trade and Industry under four headings: support for advisory services, support for investment, support for innovation and support for exports.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister take a leaf out of the Scottish Development Agency's book and publish a guide for England similar to the one that is already published in Scotland, which outlines clearly and in one publication the assistance that is available to small industries north of the border?

Mr. Trippier: We have already produced an effective and, I think, widely accepted document entitled "Help for Growing Businesses" and another one that is called "How to Make Your Business Grow", which has met with wide support throughout the country. I am considering publishing a guide that could be fitted into the pocket which would provide a signposting service to those important people we are trying to help who are running small businesses.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend confirm that when he continues with his exercise of assistance to small businesses he will produce in due course a legislative framework which will ensure that there is a coherent policy for small businesses?

Mr. Trippier: As I said in a debate on a private Member's Bill on 18 January 1985, I am concerned about the number of initiatives that are coming forward. There may need to be some composite framework to enable initiatives to be brought forward. The most important thing that the Government can do is to concentrate on the economic environment in which small businesses operate.

Privatisation

7. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the performance of those businesses which his Department has returned to the private sector, whilst retaining a financial interest.

Mr. Tebbit: Not merely satisfied, but pleased and encouraged.

Mr. Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will be reassured to know that his opinion on these matters coincides with my own. Will he confirm that all the businesses that his Department has returned to the private sector have improved their performance as a result? As this makes jobs both more numerous and more secure, we all look forward to his pressing ahead with privatisation in other areas.

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, in general all the businesses which have been returned to the private sector have been doing very well, for example, Cable and Wireless, British Aerospace, Jaguar, Tyne Shiprepairers, Allied Steel and Wire, Inmos, and Goole shipyard. The House may be interested in the example of Cable and Wireless. Since privatisation its profits have nearly trebled. The Government's income from our 23 per cent. holding is now roughly the same as that which we received when we were the sole shareholder. Our 23 per cent. stake has a stock market valuation of over £500 million, which is a little more than the valuation of the entire company when we first sold 50 per cent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But what about the future of Johnson Matthey? Why is access being denied to the records of the company? Is something being hidden?

Mr. Tebbit: It has not been privatised. It does not arise on this question.

Mr. Hill: Can my right hon. Friend give an update to the House on the privatisation of British Airways? We are all anxious that privatisation should go ahead, and an update from him would be useful.

Mr. Tebbit: We are so closely approaching the further sale of shares in British Aerospace that it would be wise for me not to say anything about that matter without careful consideration. British Airways is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and I hope that he will be able to make a statement in the not too distant future which will presage the launch of British Airways back into the private sector.

Mr. Crowther: Does the Secretary of State agree that the establishment of Sheffield Forgemasters, which, if I remember rightly, was code named Phoenix III, has been a near disaster, not just for the British Steel Corporation but for the private sector company involved? In connection with the Phoenix II scheme involving a merger of BSC Special Steels with the GKN Brimbo works, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that GKN is now advertising in the *South Yorkshire Press* for a manager with experience of continuous casting for its Brimbo works where there is no continuous casting at the moment? Does that not support the view that I have expressed before that Phoenix II will not happen?

Mr. Tebbit: There is no guarantee of success merely because of privatisation. It is the lack of guarantee that makes success far more likely. There was no guarantee of success for the firms involved in Sheffield Forgemasters or the possible participants in Phoenix II. There is no guarantee of success if those parts stay in the public sector. The hon. Gentleman characteristically forgot to mention Allied Steel and Wire, which is by far the biggest privatisation and is extremely successful.

Mr. Alton: Does the Secretary of State believe that, since its return to the private sector, British Telecom has taken sufficient cognisance of the effects on British industry and the consumer of its procurement policy and, in particular, its decision to purchase the derived services system from AT and T and its decision on system Y? Does he agree that the long-term interests of British industry and consumers should come before short-term profit motives?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, I do. That is why it is wise to put such firms back into the private sector where such long-term considerations are not distorted by short-term political considerations.

Mr. Sayeed: As the Tornado aircraft is of considerable importance to at least one of the companies properly denationalised, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a great shame that the Treasury is denying ECGD facilities for the sale to Turkey of 40 Tornado aircraft, which amounts to about £1 billion?

Mr. Tebbit: I have no information that such an order has been placed nor that the Treasury, as opposed to ECGD, which is part of my Department, has denied credit to cover such an order. It could not be, since an order has not been placed. The whole raison d'être of exporting, like any other form of business, is to ensure that one sells to a customer who is well able to afford the purchase price and accept the credit terms that might be involved.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: With regard to British Telecom, is the Secretary of State aware that BT's imminent decisions to purchase an alternative switching system to that of system X from an overseas manufacturer will have damaging consequences for United Kingdom telecom manufacturers, European co-operation and the export prospects of system X? He is anxious to take what credit he can. Will he now face his responsibilities? Does he agree that it is a matter for his attention under part I, section 3, of the Telecommunications Act 1984? It should be a matter under which he could give a general direction under part III of that Act to the Director General of Oftel to investigate the reason and the need for British Telecom to take that decision.

Mr. Tebbit: British Telecom has the prime duty of serving its consumers. That is of vital economic importance. It is one of the reasons why companies are now coming back from overseas into the City of London to enjoy good telecommunications facilities as opposed to the position when his Government were in office and British Telecom was being mucked around from one end of Whitehall to the other and companies were leaving the City of London because they could not get adequate telecommunications. In acting in the best interests of the consumer, British Telecom will be acting in the best interests of the British economy.

Small Workshops Scheme

8. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will make a statement about the review of the small workshops scheme.

Mr. Trippier: A statement will be made when the review of the scheme is complete.

Mr. Franks: Can my right hon. Friend comment on the success and encouragement of the private sector in the provision of workshops?

Mr. Trippier: The scheme has encouraged more private sector provision of workshops, without any doubt. Our preliminary study in 1982 found that the number of small workshops provided each year had probably tripled since the scheme was introduced.

Mr. Litherland: The Minister will be aware that there is something like 19 million sq ft of vacant industrial property in Manchester. If it is not put to good use for small business units or received.-tech, it will fall into dereliction and demolition. What is the Government's policy on the financing of refurbishment?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman may be impressed to hear that I made a regional official visit to Manchester to see some of the small workshops operating in his constituency and outside it. I found to my great surprise that some of the costs that were to be charged to the small business man were far too high. It has to be recognised that, certainly initially, the rents have to be relatively low to encourage these people to come into small workshops.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable interest in the scheme in Norfolk? Does he agree with me that it is imperative to keep it going, if only on a limited scale, applying to a smaller square footage?

Mr. Trippier: That is a question for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I shall draw his attention to the remarks made by my hon. Friend.

Export Fairs

9. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the budget for export fairs by the British Overseas Trade Board for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): The net expenditure provision for the export promotion services administered by the British Overseas Trade Board is £27·7 million for 1985-86 and £27·4 million for 1986-87. The BOTB set out its provisional allocations of this money to individual programmes, including overseas trade fairs, in a consultation document circulated to industry last December, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. It will be reviewing the allocations in the light of comments received.

Mr. Freeman: Is my hon. Friend aware that shoe exports to the United States are booming at present, but the strong dollar will not last and the industry faces high and unfair tariff barriers against it, particularly in the Commonwealth and in that arch-protectionist country, Japan? Will he therefore ensure, when he sets the budget allocation for overseas fairs, that he targets that money against those countries that unfairly discriminate against us?

Mr. Butcher: I am delighted to hear of any industry that takes advantage of the favourable trading conditions now pertaining arising from the dollar exchange rate, and that the shoe industry in particular is now making its presence felt in that market. I am aware of a number of issues that my hon. Friend has raised on behalf of his constituents. We shall certainly take into account in the current review the comment that he has made.

Mr. Park: Is the Minister aware of the concern of the chemical industry about the proposed changes in the future

activities of the BOTB, because it believes that these changes could lead to lesser representation abroad and gaps which individual companies could not fill?

Mr. Butcher: One of the areas of concern has been the change that may result in less support for those who go regularly to the same markets and to the same sort of promotion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will draw some encouragement from the proposals made by the BOTB, which emphasise the support that should be given to the smaller firms, which are not represented in large measure in the chemical industry but are in most other industries, particularly the first-time visitor to a new market, for whom the contribution is being reduced.

Mr. Michael Morris: In carrying out this consultation, will my hon. Friend make sure that he has up-to-date information on what the French, Germans and Italians offer in this field, because from the evidence that I found in south-east Asia we are not yet competing on equal terms in this area?

Mr. Butcher: It is always difficult to compare like with like. With regard to this type of support measure, we believe that the United Kingdom has a level of support which is more or less par for the course. But, of course, there are other ways in which companies can support their trading efforts, and we keep these under constant surveillance. We are anxious to see that our own exporters have an equal chance when faced with these competitive discrepancies.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware that there have been a number of instances recently where high technology firms, seeking to display their goods at export fairs, have been prevented from doing so because of the American Government seeking to apply their law in Britain? What steps will the Minister take to ensure that that does not happen in future?

Mr. Butcher: We have to keep the problem in its proper context. The hon. Gentleman and I had an exchange on it last Friday. Although we have to look after British interests, particularly in regard to new technology exports, we should be aware of the immense efforts that Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union are making to strip out strategic exports, particularly in certain delicate areas of software and information technology hardware.

Mr. Conway: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the level of co-ordination and co-operation between the British Overseas Trade Board and the regional development associations which sponsor trade missions and the various cultural missions to promote Britain abroad?

Mr. Butcher: I think it is all part of the general package to sell "UK Ltd." effort in the international markets. We are anxious to liaise with and support any measure that enhances the reputation of British goods abroad.

Scrap Iron and Steel (Exports)

10. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will use his powers to impose quotas on the export of scrap iron and steel.

Mr. Butcher: National controls could be imposed only on exports to third countries, not to the European Community. In the absence of an EC export contr regime, exports would simply be diverted via anoth member state, and the controls would be ineffective.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Minister aware that it is ve worrying that he does not seem to appreciate the problen of British iron and steel foundries, which have be seriously affected because the price of scrap iron and ste has increased threefold in the past 18 months? Compani such as the Grahamston Iron Company in my constituenc have worked hard, on the advice of the Government, to g themselves into a profitable situation, only to have the feet cut from under them by the Government's failure take action on this very serious problem.

Mr. Butcher: I am very much aware of the curre concerns of the foundrymen. I met a large number of the last Friday, representing several branches of their institut They told me of their concern about scrap prices. We ha to decide to what extent it is a temporary phenomenc —there is usually a peak in January and February—ar the extent to which co-ordinated European Communi action can be brought to bear on the problem. I am al aware of the problem regarding Spain. I believe that th question of the Italian subsidy has been satisfactori resolved through the European Commission.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my hon. Friend acce that, obliged as we are to him for being much aware of th problem, that is no substitute for action in the matter? he aware that the reason for scrap metal prices risin threefold, damaging an already bereft industry, is Spain protection of its steel industry, which enables it to pu more and more for scrap metal? Will the Minister be le aware and more active on our behalf?

Mr. Butcher: The question of Spanish practice in th connection will be resolved entirely when Spain come into the European Community. *[Interruption.]* My hon Friend says that he requires more action. That action mu come within Europe. My hon. Friend the Minister of Sta will, if appropriate, make representations to the Ste Council if the current phenomenon looks like bein permanently damaging.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister realise that for hi to suggest that we have to wait for the problem to be dea with until Spain's accession to the Common Market unforgivable indolence on the part of the Government?

Mr. Butcher: The right hon. Gentleman obvious does not understand two things. The first is that we hav a surplus of scrap output of 4 million tonnes per annum Therefore, within the European Community it is virtuall impossible for us to take the measures that he requires.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman fails to understan that the scrap industry, which employs 100,000 people, in itself a very significant employer. The industry mu make its decisions on its marketing plans. We a concerned, and we shall take action if the particul phenomenon looks like doing the sort of damage that m hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (M Beaumont-Dark) suspects that it may do.

Mr. Ewing: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of th reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise th matter on the Adjournment.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

11. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest position regarding the negotiation of an extension of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The European Community will need to express a view in the GATT textiles committee in July of this year, on whether these restrictions should be extended, modified or discontinued. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has been consulting interested parties before deciding what line the United Kingdom should take.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that right hon. and hon. Members from Leicestershire and the east midlands will insist that this essential arrangement for knitwear and textiles be extended and that we shall want to see him pressing hard in the Common Market for an effective and realistic marketing policy?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade will as well. We take representations made by the knitting industry seriously. We have consulted trade bodies in the past few months.

Mr. James Lamond: Has the Minister seen the letter from the "Think British" campaign, which expresses deep anxiety lest the Silberston report be accepted by the Government and the multi-fibre arrangement be scrapped? Surely the Minister will not give any credence to that report when he realises that 67 per cent. of textiles in Britain are now being imported.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman says that we should not give any credence to the report, but, with a sector that has been as protected as the textile industry——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Rubbish.

Mr. Lamont: Despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) says, it is difficult to deny that textiles have been the most protected sector of British industry. It is plainly right that we should have some independent assessment of the cost to the consumer and to employment of that industry. It must be right to ask that question.

Mr. Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that the textile and clothing industry is the fourth largest employer in the country, having at one time been the largest, but having been decimated by unfair competition during the past 50 years? Will he accept the view expressed by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) and take on board the one recommendation from the Silberston report that makes sense—that the MFA be renewed in 1986? The rest of the report's recommendations are based on utterly unconvincing arguments and, according to the whole of the industry, on no sound evidence. Will my hon. Friend guarantee to continue the MFA?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is a strong advocate of the textile industry and has a strong constituency interest in it. I am sure he agrees that we must examine these matters from a wider, national point of view. We must consider the cost to the United Kingdom as a whole. I agree that the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry is a substantial employer—it accounts for 10 per cent. of employment in manufacturing industry. We must take account of that, but Professor Silberston attempted to answer and qualify whether gains to employment elsewhere, outside my hon. Friend's constituency, could have been greater if there had not been such protection.

Mr. Winterton: And he came up with no evidence.

Mr. Lamont: It is sensible to ask and examine that question.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Minister aware that even Professor Silberston said, as a modest estimate, that 40,000 jobs would disappear if the MFA was phased out? Is he aware that his failure to give a firm commitment to renew the MFA causes great lack of confidence in the industry? Is he further aware that an extension of the MFA is wanted unanimously by employers and employees?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman must not leap to the conclusion that we have formed a decision on this matter. He misrepresents the Silberston report. I agree that it said that jobs would disappear in textiles, but it also said that other jobs would be created elsewhere in the economy as a result.

Mr. Winterton: But it did not say where.

Mr. Lamont: Professor Silberston said that prices in the United Kingdom would be 5 per cent. lower and that prices of imports would be 5 to 10 per cent. lower.

Mr. Winterton: But he gave no evidence at all.

Mr. Lamont: Such price reductions would help to create jobs. Any Government with the national interest at hear must ask and examine that question.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend recall that when the multi-fibre arrangement was first introduced it was for only a short time to allow the industry to become more modern? Does this not show that protectionism defends the inefficiencies of an industry and prevents it from becoming efficient? In addition, is not the MFA a direct attack on the consumer, adding to costs and high prices?

Mr. Winterton: Crass ignorance.

Mr. Lamont: I am glad to see that this issue arouses strong emotions both ways. I think that Professor Silberston demonstrated that many jobs in the textile industry would have disappeared, even with protection, because of increasing productivity and because so much of the competition for our textile and clothing industry has come from within the Common Market. That is where the greatest increase of imports has come from, not from the low-cost countries.

Mr. Gould: Has the Minister paid sufficient attention and given sufficient weight to the powerful, expert and conclusive criticism from all quarters of the methodology and conclusions of the Silberston report? Will he take this opportunity to dispel the strong impression that the Government do not care about the future of the textile industry? Will he repudiate the Silberston report and make it clear that the Government's policy is to negotiate a new and fully effective multi-fibre arrangement?

Mr. Lamont: The Government care about the textile industry and were responsible for the negotiation of the last round of the MFA. I have said to my hon. Friend the

Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that we recognise that it accounts for a large number of jobs, but it is legitimate and right for a Government to attempt to quantify the cost to the customer and the United Kingdom economy of that continuing protection. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has said that everybody criticises the methodology of the Silberston report. He is wrong. Some people, such as Samuel Brittan in the *Financial Times* two weeks ago, criticise it because it underestimates the cost to the economy and to the consumer. We have to take those things into account.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his robust defence of the consumer in opposing protectionism by measures such as the MFA. I look forward to his negotiating an agreement that will see the end of that in a few years. When and how will he take into account the opinion of the House before he comes to a view in his Department before going to Brussels in June?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and obviously the opinion of the House is important. I hope that, through the usual channels, we can arrange a debate so that opinion on this matter can be expressed. I am grateful for what he said about protectionism. I am sure that he will have noticed the contrast between what hon. Members have been saying in the past few seconds and what they were saying 25 minutes ago about protectionism in the United States.

Manufactured Goods

12. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactured goods in each of the last four years; and what are the trends in the current year.

Mr. Tebbit: In 1981 the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactured goods was 6·25 per cent. This information is not available for later years.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that various estimates show that the proportion is decreasing? Is not one of the main reasons for that the fact that since 1979 investment in manufacturing industry has gone down by about 30 per cent. and that in 1984 we were importing £4,000 million worth more of manufactured goods than we were exporting? This is deplorable. What do the Government intend to do about it?

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: Never mind the pained expression.

Mr. Tebbit: It is a rather pained expression because I find it boring to try to teach the hon. Gentleman basic economics when he is not ready to learn them. I have heard the hon. Gentleman express sympathy for the cause of the less developed world and the newly industrialised countries. I should have thought he would understand that, as they come into the world of manufacturing exports, it is inevitable that the share of some other countries will be reduced and that he will want the developing countries to take a larger share.

Mr. Waller: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that our share of the world's manufacturing market is very seriously affected by the barriers that other countries may raise against us? When he considers a successor multi-fibre arrangement, will he take in account the fact that the United States, which has considerable market for textile imports, also opera considerable tariff barriers against imports? Will he al take into account the fact that if the European Commun were to get rid of quotas without commensurate acti being taken by the United States, it would have a serio effect upon industry, particularly upon employment?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, I shall, but my task in combati protectionism in the United States, particularly in textile will not be made any easier for me if I find, when I go the United States, that the remarks of my hon. Friend t Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) have be quoted there, and I am told that a most robust defence protectionism is being made and that it is members of t Government party who are making it. Hon Members oug to be encouraged by the fact that in 1984 our volume manufactured exports rose by 8·5 per cent. over 198 That is not a bad performance.

Mr. Gould: But is the Secretary of State aware that is not the developing countries, but Japan, German France and Italy which have taken our share of the tra in manufactured goods? We are by now familiar with t right hon. Gentleman's pretence that he is not worri about this decline, but will he now come clean and tell what progress has been made by the special working par that he set up to look into the problem?

Mr. Tebbit: I am slightly mystified by this speci working party, about which I myself have not heard. I d not want to be boring, but I have to tell the hon. Gentlema that what matters is not the balance of any particul sector, or any particular trading partner, but the overa balance of trade. Last year was the fifth year running a surplus on our current account. That record unsurpassed since 1945.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Oil.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman speaks of oil. strongly suspect that if, in 20 years' time, the shado Opposition spokesman on trade and industry says that th decline in our oil exports marks a total disaster for th British economy and my successor say, "But look at ou manufactured exports," it will be dismissed as irrelevan The one thing that the Opposition do not like is good news That is why they have not quoted the latest CBI report o exports, particularly on manufactured exports.

Mr. Williams: But is the Secretary of State utterl oblivious of the fact that for the first time in the moder industrial history of this country there is a deficit o manufactured trade? Does he realise that any upturn i manufactured exports that there happens to be at th moment is due to the fall in the pound, a fall for which th Government insist that they have no responsibility?

Mr. Tebbit: The right hon. Gentleman wants it bot ways. I understand that yesterday his right hon. Friend th Leader of the Opposition described the fall in the value o the pound as a great British disaster. Now the right hon Gentleman is saying that it is very good for Britis industry. The only criticism today is that we were no responsible for it. I wish to God he would get together wit his right hon. Friend so that there is some consistency i what they say. I have to repeat to the right hon. Gentlema that our manufactured exports are recovering very wel

that an 8·5 per cent. increase in volume over 12 months is not a bad record and that the CBI believes that the outlook is very, very good.

Information Technology (Skill Shortages)

14. **Mr. Grylls** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is proposing to solve the problems of skill shortages in the information technology industries.

Mr. Butcher: My Department already supports a number of training initiatives in information technology. In addition, the information technology skill shortages committee, which I chair, will shortly be publishing its final report. That will sum up progress made in implementing recommendations already made by the committee, and will provide signposts for future action.

Mr. Grylls: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Obviously the Government have a real interest, but what are Ministers doing to persuade the industry that it should provide training to help provide the people needed?

Mr. Butcher: The first major result of our initial report on skill shortages has already been delivered, and that is the setting up of an information technology skills agency within the education foundation of the CBI. That will specifically charge itself with the channelling of private sector resources into our higher education sector. I hope that the new partnership, which is a market-driven link between industry and academia, will shortly be in place.

Mr. Hoyle: What steps will the Minister take about the £2 billion deficit in our trade and information technology? That was supposed to be one of the industries of the future. Will it now be another Government failure?

Mr. Butcher: The information technology industry in the United Kingdom, in terms of both hardware and software, is coming back strongly. There is not a pure deficit in information technology products if consumer electronics such as videos are excluded. But it is the case that the Government will do something about the skills shortage factor, which many of our electronics companies are saying is a major constraint on further development.

Mr. Michael Marshall: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not to be regretted that in one hour this afternoon we have covered only some 13 questions? Would the process of achieving greater productivity, which would be appropriate for trade and industry questions, be improved if two Opposition Front Bench spokesmen had not spoken on question 12?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that some of us feel that the recent doctrine that you have introduced of calling two Front Bench spokesmen from the Labour Opposition during the course of statements and other such proceedings in the House is intolerable to Back Benchers who wish to speak. May we have an assurance that we will not now have a further extension of that doctrine, with two Labour Front Bench spokesmen being called on individual questions during Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: The Liberal and SDP alliance had no fewer than five questions called this afternoon. In relation to the numbers in the Chamber that is a fair measure.

Our productivity was not very high this afternoon, but the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and the House know that I try to call hon. Members who have later questions on the Order Paper and no fewer than 12 of them were called this afternoon.

Mr. Barron: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) a bit ambiguous? As only one SDP Member is present, there has been no opportunity to call two of them.

Later——

Mr. Haynes: Further to a point of order raised earlier Mr. Speaker. You obviously did not see me sitting in the corner of the Chamber. A short time ago the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) raised a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Have not we dealt with that?

Mr. Haynes: No. This is a serious point. From time to time there are complaints and points of order from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House about the length of time taken by supplementary questions to Ministers and their replies. I think you will agree that there needs to be a hurrying up of questions and answers—[HON. MEMBERS: "And points of order."] The real problem is at the Government Dispatch Box. Today we have had the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry spending far too much time attacking the Labour party when he should have been answering questions.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I may deal with the hon. Gentleman's general proposition, I think that both Front Benches will understand when I say that I am anxious to ensure that more Back Benchers are called. The longer the time taken by Front Benchers on both sides of the House, the less time there is for Back Benchers.

Joint Committee Proceedings (Okehampton Bypass)

3.33 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Along with two other hon. Members I have been placed with three noble Lords on the Joint Committee on the petition of general objection against the two Okehampton bypass compulsory purchase orders. That Committee is established under the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945. My point of order concerns the way in which the proceedings of that Committee commenced yesterday and this morning.

I must explain why the Committee is considering a matter which was the subject of a public inquiry as long ago as 1979, which lasted no fewer than 96 days and which finally led to a report of more than 600 pages.

The Secretary of State announced his decision to confirm that report on 16 September 1983. Unfortunately, the road crosses land known as open space which would have to be compulsorily acquired. The failure to provide adequate compensatory land — we are talking about a small acreage——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a point of order for me. I do not think that I am responsible for anything that the hon. Member is now talking about.

Mr. Wiggin: I am seeking to give, as briefly as I can, the background to the substance of my point of order.

This procedure has allowed objectors, with help from the other place, to bring to the attention of the Joint Committee the adequacy or otherwise of the compensation under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The Committee is quite reasonably required to resolve that matter. However, in practice what is happening is that the whole planning inquiry is being re-run upstairs in that Committee.

My complaint is that the petitioner has started to conduct the inquiry all over again, basing his right to do so on the acceptance of his petition by, in our case, the Chairman of Ways and Means.

I shall not trouble you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a very important debate to follow this, and these are matters which do not concern me.

Mr. Wiggin: Although I accept the fact that it is right for this House, in conjunction with the other place, to be required to assist to protect the rights of individuals in relation to open space, I am raising a very serious point. If planning inquiries can be brought to this place and re-run from start to finish, the statutory procedures applying to the Government's purchase of land are threatened.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether you can assist me in ensuring that this matter is dealt with by the Select Committee on Procedure in order to avoid that most undesirable happening. If you are so able to help me, I hope your advice will be that the Committee should adjourn until the Select Committee on Procedure has dealt with the matter.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he was kind enough to give me notice of his point of order and I have been able to look into it in great detail.

I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has asked me to take an action which is beyond my power. I have no power to direct a Committee to adjourn. Nor have I any power to refer a matter that is before one Committee to another Committee, so I cannot refer it to the Procedure Committee.

The Joint Committee is proceeding under the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945, as amended, as the hon. Gentleman said, and under Standing Orders. Therefore, I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. I am sorry.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 15 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. David Winnick
Mr. Gavin Strang
Mr. Neil Thorne

Town and Country Planning (Protection of Trees and Woodlands) (Amendment)

3.44 pm

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 so that trees with preservation orders which are removed from or destroyed in woodland must be replaced.

I shall not detain the House long, because an important debate is to follow. I thank hon. Members for displaying an interest in the Bill and remaining in the Chamber for a Bill about sensible, modest conservation. The Bill is not contentious, and has received wide support, not only from the different political parties but from the different interested groups involved. It involves no expenditure of public money, and corrects an anomaly which has remained for too long. The Bill removes an anomaly left in section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. Under that legislation, if a protected tree or trees in woodland is destroyed or cut down, the local authority has no power to order the replacement of the tree or trees. If a tree which is not in a woodland has a tree protection order attached to it and is destroyed, the local authority has that power. That is an anomaly.

In 1977, the Department of the Environment wrote to the Association of County Councils:

"we accept for the moment that this appears to be a loophole which could well be closed."

I do not envisage the Bill as the final move to strengthen the law in relation to tree and woodland conservation. It is designed as a short-term stop-gap measure until the Government find time to introduce something more far-reaching. When the 1971 legislaton was debated, the Solicitor-General, now the Foreign Secretary, said of the provision for trees that there was

"no question of this legislation being erected as a kind of Maginot Line . . . It should be regarded more as a launching pad."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1971; Vol. 283, c. 509.]

By presenting the Bill, I am acknowledging what my right hon. and learned Friend said, since I am demonstrating and affirming that the present tree legislation is by no means sufficient enough to be called final. I seek to launch a modest, correcting Bill.

Since the war, between one third and one half of our ancient woodland has been destroyed. That is more than in the previous 400 years. In my county of Northamptonshire, about two thirds of ancient woodland has been lost in the same period, through intensive forestry, agricultural development and residential development, much of which was no doubt necessary and valuable. In Kettering, the local authority recently had no power to prevent the destruction of protected trees in a woodland. The sense of hopelessness drew my attention to the anomaly in the Bill.

Those who support the Bill include the Association of District Councils, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Country Landowners' Association, the National Farmers Union and the Tree Council. I am grateful to all those bodies for their support and advice.

Moreover, as the House will have noticed, county councils are becoming restive, are seeking and have sought private legislation to correct the anomaly. Already, we have the County of Kent Act 1981, section 79 of which has the same effect as this Bill. The Berkshire Bill [Lords], section 16 of which provides the text of my Bill, is at present before the House.

It is right that the House should correct the anomaly through a public Bill rather than permit a patchwork of corrections sought by individual county councils. I hope that the Government will soon take the initiative to take the concept of tree preservation orders a stage further. We should move from a negative concept of tree preservation to the much more dynamic and sensible concept of tree and woodland management. That is what we require and that is the next step in sensible conservation. I hope that the Government will take that initiative, because it is too big a task for a ten-minute Bill.

The Bill is modest and has support from all sides of the House. It has the support of the key parties involved in the industry and, I believe, the Government admit that a loophole exists. I urge the House to allow me to take the first and sensible step towards rectifying the problem.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roger Freeman, Sir John Farr, Mr. Kenneth Carlisle, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Simon Hughes and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (PROTECTION OF TREES AND WOODLANDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Mr. Roger Freeman accordingly presented a Bill to extend section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 so that trees with preservation orders which are removed from or destroyed in woodland must be replaced: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 March and to be printed. [Bill 94.]

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

[FIRST PART]

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Speaker: As a large number of Members wish to speak in the debate, I hope that speeches will be reasonably brief so that all who wish to speak can be called.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point relates to Report stages of Bills generally.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a Report stage. It is an Opposition day. The Report stage of the Representation of the People Bill will come later.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker.

3.46 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I beg to move,

That this House, noting the existence of local authority accumulated reserves of capital receipts of about £5 billion and the Secretary of State for the Environment's acceptance that these reserves belong to the local authorities, noting the existence of housing and infrastructure need, noting the continuing need to create real jobs, but regretting the proposals of the Secretary of State to reduce the prescribed proportion of receipts which an authority may spend in any one year, asks the Secretary of State to review these proposals and restore the prescribed proportion of housing receipts to 40 per cent. and of other receipts to what they were prior to his statement of 18th December 1984.

Following the statement on 18 December, there was an emergency debate and it would be futile to repeat today the arguments advanced on that occasion by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), whom we all wish a speedy return to good health.

In my two recent visits to the north-east and the north-west, the building employers and master builders put this new cut in local authority capital spending virtually at the top of the agenda for their discussions with me. They know that this new attack on local authorities will affect the private sector in a real sense, losing business and hence jobs. Small firms have started up on the strength of the crisis identified by the house conditions survey and large building firms have set up divisions to specialise in this work, knowing that it was heavily funded by capital receipts from the sale of land and houses. Building employers' organisations are now desprately trying to place apprentices whose firms have gone bust.

Last week, *The Times* reported that the National Consumer Council will have a paper before it next month claiming that 1 million homes are unfit to live in, and that one in 20 homes lack hot and cold running water and the same number have only outside toilets. On the same day, *The Guardian* reported:

"the Government is to give £25 million to save three stately homes".

I am all in favour of saving the country's heritage, but for millions of our fellow citizens an unfit home is their only heritage.

It is all very well for the Tory manifesto to state:

"Our goal is to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe"

and for the Prime Minister to say:

"Of course we must abolish the slums."—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1974; Vol. 880, c. 898.]

In reality, the building programme under this government is the worst since the war. In five full years of Conservative rule, new home starts averaged 180,000 per year compared with an average of 285,000 per year under the Labour Government. Indeed, in the best year under the Conservatives, 1983, housing starts totalled 214,000. That was 50,000 less than in 1978, which was the worst year under the last Labour Government. That is the sort of record we must consider today.

Builders throughout the country are expressing concern lest, if the rate of new build stays low and the improvement programme is cut back, they will be forced in the next decade to return to massive programmes based on system or non-traditional methods. They do not want to do that. Neither do the Opposition. Nor should the Government.

I suspect that this afternoon we shall hear from the Treasury Bench the familiar speech full of local authority financial jargon. We shall be told, and I accept, that unfit housing did not start in 1979. We shall also hear about the improvement programme increases of the last couple of years.

When we are building 100,000 fewer homes a year and when we are clearing slums at only one third of the rate of the last Labour Government, the very minimum required to stand still is an increase in the improvement programme. Thus, the Government have nothing to boast about.

We have some words of the Prime Minister to send us on our way in this debate. Speaking of local authorities selling assets of buildings and land, she said that that would

"bring a substantial profit to local authorities which they could use to build special units for old people, for which there is a serious need."—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1974; Vol. 880, c. 897.]

The need is no less now than it was when the right hon. Lady uttered those words at this Dispatch Box in 1974, when she was shadow Secretary of State for the Environment. Why, we are entitled to ask, has the building programme for the elderly halved, from 27,000 a year in 1980 to 14,000 in 1983?

I thought that I could safely leave it to the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon)—who, unfortunately, is not in his place—to argue a cogent case on behalf of himself and his 74 right hon. and hon. Friends who signed a motion similar to that before the House today when it was an early-day motion and we were in office. Indeed, *The Guardian* printed most of those 74 names and described it as "another Tory rebellion."

My hon. Friends will put a powerful case on behalf of their constituents, builders and local authorities. I have with me a sheaf of letters from councils throughout the country, Tory and Labour-controlled, identifying the crisis that has been caused by the further cut. However, the case that will not be put in this debate is that affecting adversely all our constituents and local authorities. Treasury and Department of the Environment Ministers will not make that case clear. It is an omission that I intend to rectify.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in a recent parliamentary answer to me, the Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to meet the group of

eight representing the construction industry? That was the first time that a Chancellor had refused to meet the representatives of the construction industry. Indeed, during the period of the last Labour Government, those representatives were able to see even the Prime Minister. The attitude of the Chancellor is typical of the way in which the Treasury and the Government are treating the construction industry.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. Indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's local authorities, Blaby and Harborough district councils, have between them 1,843 homes in the private sector either unfit or lacking basic amenities, compared with 22 in the public sector. No wonder Blaby district council says that it

"does not require major urgent capital allocation, with the possible exception of house improvement in the private sector."

Harborough district council says that because of the unlimited spend provision available in the last couple of years, it has

"increased the proportion of the housing capital programme over the past three years. . . on improvements . . . from 12 per cent . . . to 40 per cent."

It adds:

"It has been recognised that the stop-start policy of the last three years has caused unfairness to applicants, has wasted administrative work and has created public confusion regarding the grants available."

In that authority, between 1978 and 1984, there was an increase of 79 per cent. in the number of applications for homes for elderly people. That has happened in the Chancellor's own backyard.

Dover district council, the local authority of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, has 1,984 private sector homes either unfit or fit but lacking basic amenities—I have never understood how a home with an outside toilet or without hot and cold running water could be classed as fit—compared with 40 in the public sector. The district council says:

"The housing shortage continues . . . The unprecedented number of grant enquiries and applications during 1983-84 caused considerable administrative and staffing problems . . . However, the commitment, both legal and moral, that had been entered into before the restrictions were imposed and the 90 per cent. grant level reverted to 75 per cent., will still result in a high level of expenditure during 1984-85 and, to a lesser extent, in 1985-86. The frequent policy changes over the last few years have made the efficient operation of the grant scheme very difficult and has not contributed to value for money."

The local authority of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury depends on capital receipts for one third of the resources necessary to meet its programme.

The constituency of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is in Croydon. Of course, the constituency of Mr. Speaker is also in Croydon, but I would not dream of associating him with current Treasury policy. In Croydon, 5,350 homes in the private sector are unfit or lack basic amenities, compared with 610 in the public sector. In the local authority of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on census night there were over 2,000 homes with no inside toilet. The council says that it makes major use of capital receipts to supplement its housing investment programme allocation. In regard to the switch of funds to cover renovation grants it says:

"The number of applications received substantially exceeded all expectations and in the financial year 1983-84 some 4,333 grants were approved — over five times the number in the previous year."

The financial consequences of that very large moral commitment to make grants has had a major impact on the council's ability to pursue its longer-term housing strategy and, in the absence of additional resources for 1985-86, will continue to prejudice the council's housing priorities. These are all Tory authorities which are talking about a moral commitment on improvement grants.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury has a rather more leafy constituency, in the north Hertfordshire district council area, but it is not immune. In the private sector there are 840 homes unfit or lacking basic amenities, compared with 30 in the public sector. The council is dependent on capital receipts for 50 per cent. of its small programme. It says that it has to make use of available housing capital receipts to maintain its capital programme at a realistic level.

I shall not spend too much time on the Minister of State, Treasury, because he is unique in having a Labour-controlled local authority in the London borough of Hounslow. The view of that authority would not reinforce the case I am making about what Treasury authorities are saying. In Hounslow, 7,056 homes in the private sector are unfit or lack basic amenities compared with 2,236 in the public sector. The council relies on capital receipts for 50 per cent. of its housing investment programme.

The Secretary of State for the Environment represents part of the London borough of Redbridge. By now he must be sick of having the activities of his council quoted to him. In that local authority area, 4,529 homes in the private sector are unfit or lack basic amenities, compared with 398 in the public sector. His authority is also unique in that it has England's highest proportion of prefabricated concrete houses in the private sector, so it is under severe pressure to try to put into operation the legislation on housing defects.

I rest my case by quoting Councillor Salter, the Tory leader of the council; in the *Ilford Recorder* on 31 January he was quoted as saying:

"We may find it difficult to carry out our legal duties simply because we are being prevented from spending our own money. The Government have ignored the effect their instructions will have on the most vulnerable sections of the community. For example, by reducing the amount of money for improvement grants, handicapped people will suffer. Many young people will have to put off buying their first home because we will be unable to provide them with a mortgage. I have no hesitation in laying the blame for the savage cuts, and their consequences, fairly and squarely at the door of the Government who have ordered them."

In regard to the Government cut in money for housing, that newspaper article says:

"It will hit the weakest sector of the Redbridge community . . . the old, the handicapped, the poor and the young."

These are the constituents of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I cannot rest my case without referring to Eastbourne. That authority is not Tory-controlled, nor is it Labour-controlled. The Liberals have control of Eastbourne. In Eastbourne, there are 2,403 homes in the private sector that are unfit or lack basic amenities, compared with only two in the public sector. The mix of people and properties has become so bad in Eastbourne—I shall not say that this has happened under Liberal control — that the council says that it could be argued that building houses for families with children is building for a special need. That is because the mismatch of people to properties, including family-sized properties, is so bad. It is reported that the council is due to abandon schemes—I have only a press report on this—for low-cost home ownership

[Mr. Rooker]

because of the proposed changes to the capital receipt rules. That is the state of affairs in the backyard of the Minister for Housing and Construction.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), cannot escape either. The London borough of Ealing has 11,325 private sector homes that are unfit or lacking basic amenities, compared with 1,150 in the public sector.

I intended to refer to the London borough of Barnet, which is the authority in the Prime Minister's constituency. The information that I have quoted has come from the Library. I discovered by accident that it is the only place in the country, save for Marsham street, where all local authority investment strategy reports are lodged. The local authorities cannot read one another's reports, but they are all public documents and we can go through them. When I began to try to discover the number of unfit houses in Barnet, I found that all the boxes which should have contained figures had crosses in them instead. This is the Prime Minister's local authority, and surely this is taking flunkeyism rather too far. If those responsible thought that they were filling in a ballot paper, they were sadly mistaken. The House is entitled to know the number of unfit dwellings in Barnet. I hope that the state of affairs to which I have referred will be rectified speedily.

It is clear from the statement made by the London borough of Barnet that it is dependent on capital receipts for no less than 50 per cent. of its spending on its housing programme, including improvement grants and new build. The borough refers to

"the extensive use of capital receipts to augment a HIP allocation".

It spent £12·5 million and its investment allocation from the Government was only £6·5 million, which was about 50 per cent. of the total spend. It then refers to improvement grants and states:

"it will be several years before the current 'would-be' applicants will receive grants, and many of them will be disappointed not to receive their grants sooner. Criticism has already been made of the delays and the failure to meet these raised expectations."

I wonder whether that has been brought home to the local Member or to the other Members in the area. I do not know how the criticism has been expressed.

I appreciate that this is a short debate and that it would be an abuse of my privilege in opening it for the Opposition to speak for too long. I have presented a thumbnail sketch of the constituencies and local authorities of the decision makers who propose to bring the order to reduce capital receipts before the House. I have referred to the constituencies and local authorities of Treasury Ministers and Ministers of the Department of the Environment who are concerned with housing. I have set out the state of their own backyards. There is massive unmet need for improvement in the private sector. They are ignoring that need and consequently failing to meet it by proposing to impose further cuts in capital receipts.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Southwark): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that what he says does not even include the enormous demand in each of the boroughs and districts that he has mentioned from people who wish to move there but who are told that there is no chance at all because the lists are blocked and the opportunities are blocked? The local councils do not have the money to create or rehabilitate any more homes for the people who would like to go to those areas but cannot do so because of the same policies?

Mr. Rooker: Yes. I have read the documents of local authorities that come within the constituencies of the members of the Government who will be responsible for reducing capital receipts. They make fascinating reading. I suggest that right hon. and hon. Members trawl through them.

Birmingham is the largest housing authority in England and the House will know that I have the honour to represent part of the city. There are 36,190 private homes in Birmingham that are unfit or lacking in basic amenities. There are 25,670 public sector homes in the same category. As a result of the cuts in the use of capital receipts, Birmingham will lose £40 million in 1985-86. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent the city in this place have been told by Birmingham's treasurer that this will mean no new building for the elderly and the disabled. It will prevent structural repairs from being undertaken to dangerous high-rise blocks. It will mean that there will be no funds for improvement grants, including those which are a priority for the disabled and the chronically sick. There will be no capital work within the education service and no action will be taken to replace toilet blocks that are still in school yards. Essential fire precaution work in homes for the elderly will be dropped. The clearance and recycling of derelict sites will stop as well. Those six consequences will be the direct result of the loss to Birmingham of £40 million.

In fact, the list is endless. The voluntary sector throughout the country will be stopped from doing its work. Slum clearance programmes will stop and build-for-sale will be stopped. The Institute of Housing undertook a survey of a list of local authorities and the various statements that have been made following the statement make illuminating reading. I hope that one of my hon. Friends will be able to refer to them in detail, because they represent a catalogue of disaster. This is the result of stopping local authorities spending their own money.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): The hon. Gentleman has catalogued his views. Does he accept that cuts or reductions in local authority capital expenditure are nothing new and have taken place under Conservative and Labour Governments in recent years? Does he recall the words of the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer on 22 July 1976, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), when he referred to reductions in public expenditure? Talking about housing, he said:

"It is therefore necessary to reintroduce control over this programme and to limit the rate of approvals so that over-spending is avoided."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1976; Vol. 915, c. 2015.]

Did the hon. Gentleman make the same remarks then that he is making now?

Mr. Rooker: The answer to the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. I presume that the hon. Gentleman is not one of the 74 Conservative Members who have signed the motion to which I referred about a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes ago.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): He is one of the 74.

Mr. Rooker: He cannot be. If he is, I presume that he will seek to intervene in my speech to clarify the position. He has not done so, so it is clear that he is not one of the 74.

Mr. Powley *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

Since 1979, there has been a 69 per cent. cut in housing provision. I have detailed the position in 1984-85 coming on to 1985-86 for Tory authorities and Birmingham. I have explained that on average we are building 100,000 homes fewer each year than the number built under the previous Labour Government, notwithstanding the cuts to which the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) has referred. We are clearing slums at only a third of the rate which was achieved under the last Labour Government. We are building up a massive crisis for the future. Does the hon. Gentleman still want to intervene? It appears that he does not.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does my hon. Friend recall that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) was the Minister for Housing and Construcion he was always pressing local authorities to spend more? His complaint was that they were not spending the moneys that were being made available to them. It cannot be said that during that period the Labour Administration did not fulfil all their undertakings to the electorate on housing finance support.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. The situation has changed, because since 1980 there has been a new form of funding. The Prime Minister told us, as I said earlier, that we should use the money from capital receipts—she called it the profits — to re-invest. She spoke of re-investing in special housing units for the elderly. As I have explained, even that programme under this Government has been cut by half since 1980. The hon. Member for Norwich, South cannot have it both ways. He cannot keep harping back to the previous Labour Government when the record since 1980 is getting worse.

The Government have admitted that they do not know how the capital receipts have been used. That fact has been given in an answer to a parliamentary question. I cite the one on 9 November at column 23 in *Hansard*. The Government further admit that they have no information on the level of unspent receipts. I cite column 504 of 28 November 1984. They do not know how the capital receipts are being used or the level of the unspent receipts. What do they know that causes them to bring forward these further cuts? We have the Prime Minister's pledge which she gave in the House to abolish the slums and to use the profits from sales for building. The Government know that, due to their low building programme overall — I am not arguing about tenure — low clearance rates and the now declining improvement programme, the nation has a crisis on its hands. We can make a start today to stop that.

4.11 pm

The Minister for Housing and Construction (Mr. Ian Gow): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"notes the existence of local authority accumulated reserves of capital receipts of about £5 billion and the Secretary of State for the Environment's acceptance that these reserves belong to the local authorities; further notes that housing and infrastructure needs are reflected in the gross provision of over £4 billion for local authority capital spending in 1985-86; and welcomes the Government's determination to keep next year's local authority capital expenditure within the total provided in the Autumn Statement and approved by this House on 6th December 1984."

Essentially this debate is about housing and jobs but it is also about public expenditure and the Government's determination to keep spending next year within the limits provided for in the autumn statement and approved by the House on 6 December. In that statement, the Government provided for gross capital spending by local authorities in England of just over £4 billion.

The Government's policies on local authority capital expenditure strike a necessary balance between the needs of local authorities and what the nation can afford. Those policies are part of a wider strategy to reduce inflation and to sustain economic growth. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) laughs about sustaining economic growth and keeping down inflation but an inflation rate of 5 per cent. is the lowest we have had for 16 years and we now have the fourth year of economic growth at 3 per cent. It is the longest period of sustained recovery since the war. The numbers in work increased by 342,000 in the year ending September 1984, and last year total public and private capital investment is estimated at £55 billion — an all-time record — and that record is likely to be exceeded this year.

Mr. Straw: With that catalogue of economic success, which only the Minister and his friends in the Cabinet recognise but which is completely unrecognisable by the rest of the country, will the Minister say why Britain's unemployment record is now the worst of all the major industrialised countries when in 1979 it was at average? The Government's real international record is that they have raised unemployment to record levels this century.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman's facts are wrong. He knows that over the past year the rate of increase in unemployment in most EEC countries has been higher than that in the United Kingdom.

An essential part of our strategy is to achieve low inflation and the basis of economic growth is to control the level of public expenditure and borrowing, including that of local authorities. For a time, at any rate, those were the policies of the Labour party. It is true that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was never a member of the Administration in which his right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) served as Chancellor, but it was the then Chancellor who wrote to the managing director of the International Monetary Fund in these terms — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen do not like this, but they will be reminded of it. On 15 December 1976, the then Chancellor writing on the subject of today's debate—I am entitled to quote it —said:

"The Government's intention in the years ahead is to reduce the share of resources taken by public expenditure. It is also part of this strategy to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement so as to establish monetary conditions which will help the growth of output and the control of inflation."

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Despite the letter that the Minister has just quoted, not once during the Labour Government's period of office did the number of new public sector starts fall below 100,000. As a result of the cuts that will take place in the next financial year, the number of starts will be about 20,000. Will the Minister bear in mind that the Rosehill estate in my constituency

[Mr. David Winnick]

desperately needs to be modernised? It was stated that modernisation work would start in 1985-86. I have been informed by the council that as a result of the Secretary of State's statement no work will start until the next financial year and that even then it is likely that only a few dwellings will be modernised in 1986-87. Does the Minister recognise that as a result of these policies thousands of my constituents and hundreds of thousands of other people elsewhere will be denied necessary improvements to their council dwellings, and that hardly any new dwellings will be built?

Mr. Gow: It was a mistake for me to give way to the hon. Gentleman but I nevertheless remind him that there were 198,000 completions in 1984 and that the 150,000 private sector completions last year was the highest figure for eight years.

I should like to explain to the House why it was necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to announce on 18 December that the prescribed proportion of housing receipts would be reduced for the coming financial year from 40 to 20 per cent. As the House will be aware—this has been the practice since 1981—a cash limit is set each year for local authority capital spending. It is true that there was an underspend on capital account in 1981-82 and 1982-83 but that underspend of £633 million in the first year and £870 million in the second was more than offset by a massive overspend on current account.

In 1983-84, the local authority cash limit was exceeded by £368 million. My right hon. Friend has explained that there is certain to be another overspend this year. It could be as high as £650 million. If no corrective action were taken, there would be an even larger overspend next year —possibly by as much as £1 billion. Faced with the known overspend last year, the substantially larger overspend this year, and the certainty of an even greater overspend next year, no responsible Government, having set a cash limit, could fail to take steps to secure compliance with their policy.

When the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 came into force on 1 April 1981, it was always envisaged that the prescribed proportion arising from the sale of council houses might need to be reduced to control the rate of spending of the massive receipts generated by a policy that was becoming increasingly popular. Indeed, the 1980 Act provided specifically for the prescribed proportion to be reduced. That was precisely the step that we took with effect from 1 April last year, when the prescribed proportion for council house sales was reduced from 50 to 40 per cent.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): If my hon. Friend fears the possibility of an overspend of £1,000 million in 1985-86, what assurance can he give the House, if it subsequently approves the order, that the prescribed proportion will not be reduced next year from 20 to, say, 10 per cent.?

Mr. Gow: As my hon. Friend knows, the prescribed proportion is reviewed each year in the autumn. I have just been explaining to the House that, with effect from 1 April last year, we reduced the prescribed proportion from 50 to 40 per cent., and the proposals that will be laid before the House in the form of an order next week will deal with the prescribed proportion for the coming financial year. As have already said to the House, we shall, of course, ke the prescribed proportion under review.

There is one other point that I wish to make to my ho Friend. Both I and my right hon. Friend have said fro the Dispatch Box that the present system of controllin local authority capital expenditure is the reverse of perfec We are seeking better ways of controlling local authori capital spending. For that purpose my right hon. Friend t Secretary of State, the Treasury and the local authori associations are currently engaged in discussions. I can te my hon. Friend that I hope and believe that we will be ab to find a more satisfactory way.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Gow: We have been asked to make sho speeches, and I understand that the debate must finish seven o'clock. If I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speake I hope to speak later in the debate and I will then have a opportunity to reply to the points that are raised. I ough to get on because some of my right hon. and hon. Friend wish to take part in the debate.

At the start of the next financial year, accumulate receipts are expected to amount to some £5 billion. Thi reflects the outstanding success of our right-to-buy policy a policy to which the hon. Member for Perry Barr an Deng Xiaoping have become notable and welcom converts. I recognise that the whole of the Labour part does not share the view of the hon. Member for Perry Barr

I remind the House that the following sentenc appeared in the manifesto upon which the Labour part fought, and lost, the last election. Some Labour Member still believe in the policy. The manifesto said:

"Labour will end enforced council house sales, empowe public landlords to re-purchase homes sold under the Tories o first resale and provide that future agreed sales will be at marke value."

Let me say what that means in plain English. I an talking about the sale of council houses, which happens t be the subject of today's discussion.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gow: I have told the hon. Gentleman that I will not give way.

Mr. Roberts: Frightened?

Mr. Gow: Frightened of the hon. Gentleman? Of course I am not.

Mr. Roberts: Then give way.

Mr. Gow: The reason that I am not giving way is that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, who are present in much greater strength than Labour Members, want to make a contribution to the debate.

Put in plain English, the policy of the Labour party means that Labour would end the right to buy, re-municipalise if the present owner wishes to sell and scrap the general consents available to local authorities to sell at a discount even though throughout the period of the last Labour Government local authorities were allowed to sell to sitting tenants with a discount of 30 per cent.

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Perry Barr so that he may clarify the policy of his party about the sale of council houses.

Mr. Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: No.

Our proposal to reduce the prescribed proportion from 40 to 20 per cent. does not mean that local authorities are being deprived of their capital receipts. On the contrary, they will retain those receipts. We are controlling, as we always have done, the rate at which those receipts may be spent.

Next year's housing investment programme allocations amount to £1·6 billion. To that figure local authorities will be able to add 20 per cent. of accumulated housing receipts and 30 per cent. of other receipts. In addition, of course, local authorities will be able to use 20 per cent. of housing receipts arising in 1985-86 and 30 per cent. of non-housing receipts.

Wider opportunity for home ownership is one of the key elements of our housing strategy. Since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister arrived in Downing street, more than 800,000 local authority, new town and housing association homes have been sold, almost all to sitting tenants, and some 70,000 homes have been sold under low-cost home ownership schemes, including building and improving for sale, homesteading, shared ownership and building under licence. Those were matters to which the hon. Member for Perry Barr referred in his speech.

Mr. Allan Roberts Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gow: I have already said that I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. When we say something on this side of the House, we mean it.

Over and above those 70,000 homes, 5,000 acres of land have been sold by local authorities and new towns —sufficient land for about 45,000 homes. The House will agree that that is a massive achievement.

Following my right hon. Friend's statement on 18 December 1984, many local authorities have expressed concern that the reduction in the prescribed proportion may make it difficult to promote low-cost home ownership. Indeed, that was one of the points to which the hon. Member for Perry Barr referred in his speech. Some of my hon. Friends have also made representations about this matter. We have decided, therefore, that it is right to make a special exemption when a local authority incurs capital expenditure on a low-cost home ownership scheme and then disposes of the home or land immediately.

I am glad to be able to tell the House, and particularly those of my hon. Friends who have made representations, that the prescribed proportion will remain at 100 per cent. in the following circumstances: first, where an authority buys property for resale, for example, on shared ownership terms; secondly, when it builds for sale; and thirdly, when it arranges for a developer to build for sale under licence on land which it owns.

Mr. Rooker: It could not do anything else.

Mr. Gow: I hope that this news will be welcome to the Labour party because of its professed commitment to allowing the least well-off to get their feet on the first rung of the home ownership ladder. Despite the proposed reduction in the prescribed proportion for most sales, local authorities will still have a real incentive to generate higher capital receipts in 1985-86.

I deal next with the wider issue of housing capital expenditure and spending on repairs and maintenance.

Mr. Rooker: Given the agreement of the Treasury, how much new money might be available? Can the Minister put a figure on it? Is it possible to make an estimate?

Mr. Gow: I think that the consequence that the hon. Member for Perry Barr and certainly some of my hon. Friends feared was that, if the prescribed proportion for those categories had indeed been reduced from 100 per cent., as suggested originally by my right hon. Friend, those excellent schemes might have dried up altogether. The hon. Member for Perry Barr is confirming the fears of my hon. Friends. We have been able to respond to the perfectly legitimate anxieties that were expressed by some of my hon. Friends. The answer I have given is that there will be no cost because the schemes might have dried up. It is because we accept the validity of the arguments presented to the Government that we have decided that it would be right in these circumstances to make an exception.

Gross housing provision next year—*[Interruption.]* What I have said to the House is that we have revised the original proposals to make a special exemption so that 100 per cent. of the prescribed proportion will continue to apply. Gross housing provision next year is £3,051 million, compared with £3,274 million in the current year. In each of the past two years, spending by local authorities on repairs and maintenance out of current account has exceeded £1 billion. In addition to that £1 billion, local authorities have spent on capital account a further £1 billion in each of the past two years on repairs and improvements to their housing stock.

With regard to the private sector, the House will remember that in the last year in which the Labour party was in power spending on improvement grants was £90 million, compared with £900 million in the last financial year, and an estimated £750 million in the current financial year.

Most repairs and improvements in the private sector are, of course, not financed through grants at all. We estimate that in the year ended 31 March 1984, about £8 billion was spent on repair and improvement of existing houses, financed from savings or from private sector borrowing.

When we made our housing investment allocations for the coming financial year, we took account of the severe problems that some authorities have with their older estates and with their prefabricated reinforced concrete houses. For the first time we included a special factor in the generalised needs index to take particular account of that type of dwelling. We are discussing with the local authorities more effective methods of establishing the condition of their housing stock.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gow: No.

I understand that the reduction in the prescribed proportion is a tough measure, but I say to the House— and to my hon. Friends in particular — that keeping public spending within the limits decided by the Government and approved by this House is a tough business. Other Governments, including a Labour one, have set out on the road that they knew was necessary if we were to restore honest money and sound finance. What marks out this Government from their predecessors is that where they lost their nerve we shall keep ours, and where others failed we have the determination to succeed.

4.33 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): By its very nature, the debate, as it progresses, will no doubt

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

develop a local flavour. I intend to put into that flavour and place on record the situation that is experienced by my local authority and by very many families who live within that area.

I do not want to go into detailed figures, but I must place on record that in the year 1985-86 my local authority, Sandwell, was planning on using about £10·5 million from council house sales to supplement the housing investment programme. But by his sweeping statement the Secretary of State is now withholding about £4 million of the council's own money which had previously been planned for housing purposes and to help those in need of a home.

My council is not in the habit of sending resolutions to Ministers, but it was driven to respond to the Secretary of State's December announcement with an emergency resolution, couched in the strongest possible terms, protesting at the effect it will have on Sandwell's housing programme. I support that protest.

The Minister, in opening his speech today, was right about one thing. He said that the debate was about public expenditure. It is. This latest savage exercise in voodoo economics is dictated by inflexible Treasury cash limits which have been drawn up with obsessive concern for the amount involved rather than for the quality of its use or the public need—and need there certainly is in many urban areas such as my own.

The housing authority in Sandwell has 6,000 families on the waiting list for council accommodation. In addition, an average of 130 new cases of homelessness per month are reported. Yet for the first time in our history in Black Country towns we are unable to make any new starts on house building. I thought that the Minister was about to leave. I hope that he will not leave until I am able to make this point to him.

A couple of weeks ago, when I asked the Minister what words of comfort he had for the people on waiting lists, he said that council properties which had remained empty for 12 months or more should be let. There are 76 properties in that category where structural work is now taking place. Perhaps the Minister can advise us how to fit 6,000 families into 76 houses. If the Minister will remain a little longer, I will tell him that, because of his Government's restrictions, Sandwell has not been able to continue to build sheltered housing for the elderly. That has affected the movement of families from the housing list who could have moved into properties vacated by elderly tenants.

In the private sector, we have 21,000 houses in urgent need of repair. About a third of them are unfit and need to be demolished. Yet Sandwell is not allowed the resources to declare any new housing action areas. Instead, there is cancellation or postponement of plans, many of which have been promised to tenants and are in current programmes. We are lagging far behind any reasonable assessment of need.

Total expenditure on housing for my borough has now been cut back to £17 million for 1985-86. We have actually moved backwards. £17 million was the housing budget in 1979, when the Government came to power with the manifesto boast of "Helping the Family". Not many families in my area have had housing help since the Government came into office.

Today my local authority needs £38 million to carry out its housing investment programme, but we are permitted to spend only half of what is required. In spite of inflation, in spite of natural growth, and in spite of increased demand and need, the clock has been put back six years for the people of Sandwell. We are now back to the level of 1979 when the Government came into office.

The draconian cuts under which people are having to suffer fly in the face of the words of a Government who came to office with the proclaimed falsehood of making us a better housed nation. That just was not true.

The Minister will have received representations from the leader of Sandwell council in the past few days about the costly legacy that is of additional and urgent concern to us. I refer to the findings of a survey carried out in Wednesbury, in my constituency, showing that 350 houses are at risk from the collapse of old limestone workings some 500 ft below ground.

I am sure that the Minister will join me in expressing sympathy for the families concerned, who are naturally upset and very worried about their plight. Their personal safety is not in danger, but there is understandable anxiety about the situation in which they find themselves, living as they do above mines long ago abandoned and now collapsing. I am seeking the Minister's assurance today that he will not ignore the plight of those families and that he will regard the circumstances in that area as exceptional, and be generous in his approach to it. I have no estimates of the work required for housing needs there, but, of 350 houses, about one third are owner-occupied and awards for blight or any other compensation must come by way of special grant from the Minister's Department. I hope that the Minister agrees and will say so today.

For families in council accommodation, expenditure on housing or rehousing must also be met by grant aid. Having savaged housing expenditure and imposed stringent borrowing controls on the local authority, to the extent of reducing spending on housing and taking it back to the levels of 1979, the Minister cannot ignore the plight of families living above Cow Pasture mine, in Wednesbury. Sandwell's limited resources cannot possibly be stretched to deal with the emergency. I hope that the Minister will give some guarantees and assure the council and local residents that the finance will be forthcoming.

4.41 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am sure every hon. Member will agree that 90 per cent. of the constituency cases that are brought to our advisory bureaux or which come in our post concern housing and the plight of the homeless. Is it not therefore extraordinary that, at this relatively early hour in the parliamentary day, there are present only four hon. Members from the official Opposition, just one Social Democratic Member and no Liberal Members?

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The hon. Gentleman cannot count.

Mr. Heddle: I am, of course, excluding the Front Benches.

I declare an interest as a vice-president of the Building Societies Association. It is not a pecuniary interest, but an honorary one, but one that I feel I ought to declare in view

of what I have to say. I applaud the sentiments that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing expressed, and I applaud also the Government's dedication to restricting the country's overdraft — the public sector borrowing requirement. High borrowing means higher inflation, which means high interest rates, which means more distress for industry and commerce and every borrower, including home owners.

I must confess that I find an element of contradiction — although I am not an economist, far less an accountant—in the Government amendment. However, I am prepared to listen to both sides of the argument and not to be strangled by the collar of mongrel political dogma. There is an answer to the problem. Local government finance is beset with a myriad of contradictions and mysteries resulting from what I understand is called annuality, which means that in any 12 months a sum of money still in the council's bank account must be spent before the end of that year, otherwise the council will not get more in the next year. That is not how industry and commerce runs its affairs, or how right hon. and hon. Members run their domestic affairs. That is why I applaud the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made in October at Brighton, when he said that he was prepared to examine local government finance, not simply the rating system. If we can find a solution to that problem, those which we are debating today will not arise.

I am definitely a "don't know" and shall listen carefully to both sides of the argument and cast my vote accordingly. However, I shall not cast my vote with the Opposition, because nothing that they have said has a vestige of originality. They say that we should spend more on home improvements and build more council houses, not overnight, but in the lifetime of a Parliament or two. They believe that that will resolve the crisis, but it is nonsense. Building more council houses has not reduced waiting lists. The nation's housing crisis will be resolved only if greater use is made of our existing housing stock and if more local authorities take the trouble to examine the tenants' charter enshrined in the Housing Act 1980.

If more single people on council house waiting lists took the trouble to find the many elderly people who live in three-bedroomed council houses and who would dearly love the company and rent of such people, and if local authorities took the trouble to spell out the rights which the Government have given to every tenant, there would not be such a housing crisis.

I am not attracted by the crocodile tears of Opposition Members who talk of the reduction in money spent on home improvements in the past two Parliaments. Six short years ago, £90 million was spent on home improvement grants. How much was contributed by the ratepayer and the taxpayer in the last financial year? Twice as much? Five times as much? The answer is 10 times as much—£900 million—and yet Opposition Members bleat that not enough is being spent. Of course, enough can never be spent on the nation's housing stock. It is our heritage. Nevertheless, we must find a means of investing the money which ratepayers and taxpayers provide to the maximum public effect.

Mr. Pike: The announcement of £900 million for improvement grants was made shortly before the 1983 general election. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the bonanza and blank cheque approach was an attempt to persuade people to vote Conservative at that general election?

Mr. Heddle: I am tempted not to reply to that rather banal intervention, but I should like to remind the hon. Gentleman, who obviously has the statistics at his fingertips, that, two years after that historic general election victory, £700 million is to be spent on home improvements this year.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing reminded us that there was an overspend of £368 million in 1983-84 and a £650 million overspend in 1984-85. Unless steps are taken under the order that we are to debate on another occasion, there is a possibility of the overspend being as much as £1 billion. I appreciate the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister gave to my intervention, and I shall take it into account when considering which way to vote. It is nonsense to hear that councils are overspending to the tune of £650 million and for them at the same time to be pleading poverty. It is also nonsense that there is a possibility of an overspend of £1 billion next year when there is no money to satisfy improvement grant applications this year, and when applicants might have to wait three years before their applications are considered.

It is nonsense, in the overall context, that £5,000 million of capital receipts are owned by local authorities, are invested by local authorities and are not being properly used by local authorities. Therefore, I understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Minister that there has to be an argument for restraining the amount that local authorities can spend in any one year. I can see the logic of restricting capital receipts from 40 to 20 per cent. The other side of the argument is that all our constituents want to own their own homes and to borrow or obtain grants from the local authority, but, because of the way that local authorities' finances are ordered, they are not able to do so.

I put to the House what I believe is a practical and sensible solution to this problem. In addition to that £5,000 million, some £4,000 million is locked up in mortgages granted by local authorities to former tenants of theirs who have bought their houses either voluntarily or under the right-to-buy procedure. Some £2,300 million of that £4 billion was granted by way of mortgages for 15, 20 or 25 years to former tenants who have now exercised their right to buy. I do not believe that local authorities are in the building society business. It is not their duty, as guardians of the ratepayers' money and stewards of the rate support grant system, to lock the taxpayers' and ratepayers' money up for such a long time. If they are to sell their assets, they have a duty to use those assets to the maximum benefit of the community which they are elected to serve. If they sell council houses, it is their duty to reinvest the proceeds of that sale in providing more and better housing for more people by conversion, improvment for sale, low-cost home ownership or home improvement.

Therefore, I submit to my hon. Friend the Minister that the solution to this accounting problem is to impose a duty on all local authorities to sell their mortgage books to building societies, thus releasing money which would otherwise be locked up for almost a generation, and enabling it to be used by them to the advantage of the present generation. The benefit to the local authority would be an immediate cash receipt—whether 100 per

[Mr. Heddle]

cent., 50 per cent. or whatever may be the subject of the basis of negotiation between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the local authority associations.

The benefit to the borrowers will be rather more considerable. They will have the benefit of the flexibility that a building society mortgage provides, and that will enable them to obtain a further mortgage when they sell the house and trade-up to buy another one. It would also mean that, in certain circumstances, they would be able to borrow from a building society at a lower rate of interest. At a time of temporary, I hope, but uncomfortably high rates of interest, they might receive a much more sympathetic and compassionate hearing from the local building society manager over their temporary cash flow problems than they would from a bureaucratic and possibly anonymous local authority.

The critics of my scheme, like my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, tell me that it would have a distorting effect on the money supply or the PSBR. I tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this point. I asked:

"what the effect would be on *(a)* the money supply and *(b)* the public sector borrowing requirement if the funds currently lent on first mortgages by local authorities were transferred with the borrowers" consent to building societies or other approved financial institutions in the following sums in each respect (i) £1 billion, (ii) £2 billion, (iii) £3 billion and (iv) £4 billion".

He replied:

"Providing other expenditure does not increase, then transferring local authority mortgages to the building societies or other approved financial institutions would reduce the public sector's borrowing requirement. The effect on the money supply would depend on the response of those who took on the mortgages, but it is likely that monetary conditions in the economy would be very little changed. If public expenditure did increase in line with the transfer of mortgages, then the PSBR would revert to its original level, but because monetary conditions had been largely unaffected by the initial fall in the PSBR this increase would imply some loosening of financial conditions, and would thus be inflationary unless offset by higher interest rates."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. *433-34*.]

The sting is in the tail of my right hon. Friend's answer. As I have already said, I am neither an economist nor an accountant, and therefore I am stung by the more practical, commonsense and commercial approach that lies between the lines of my right hon. Friend's answer to my rather simple and basic question.

The political reality is that the purchase of one's home is the largest, most significant and important step that each and every one of our constituents can take in his lifetime. It is a decision into which none of them enters lightly or wantonly, but it is a decision which, once entered into, brings to all our people private ownership, independence, stature and a feeling of independence in the community. Some 800,000 have taken that step, and many more could and would, but, sadly, there are some local authorities which are not entirely in tune with the aims, aspirations and ambitions of our constituents. They are politically motivated and will wish to frustrate those aims and ambitions, and now will use the excuse of being able to reinvest only 20 per cent. of capital receipts in any one year from so doing.

If the motion were carried tonight, the political reality would be that the number of council house sales would fall and a number of people who elected us in 1979 and 1983 on the promise of extending home ownership could be frustrated by forces over which the House has no c control. The motion, if carried, would, I fear, pr those local authorities with a cast-iron excus procrastinate and frustrate the freedom of those co tenants, and would perpetuate divisions in every town city.

4.57 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I am sure tha House will watch with interest to see how the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) resolve internal conflict. As he has ruled out the prospect of vo for the Opposition, he does not have many options when it comes to deciding how he will cast his vo speak on behalf of the Liberal party and the SDP. We no such inhibitions. We shall be voting solidly for motion tabled by the official Opposition because we concerned about the impact of the Government's r recent proposed cut in local authority capital spendin

First, this will have an impact on the construc industry. On that point, I quote the Building Emplo Confederation, an organisation whose members have been noted for their loyalty to the Tory party. It says what the Government are proposing could mean a 28 cent. cut in the local authority capital spending in Engl in 1985-86. It is in no doubt what that would mean. It s

"Such a massive reduction in workload would cause g problems for the construction industry and could lead to the of more than 150,000 jobs."

Such an impact would come on top of the already far fr buoyant state of the construction industry.

The current state-of-trade inquiry by the Build Employers Confederation suggests that the outlook for building industry is "bleak". Building industry outpu expected to fall this year, reversing the modest recov of the past two years. The inquiry, which was undertal among 500 Building Employers Confederation memb of all types and sizes throughout Britain, showed t barely one quarter of those questioned were working at or almost full capacity. Some 41 per cent. of th questioned expected their work load to fall in 1985, only 23 per cent. expected an increase. The same disr prospect is offered by the Federation of Master Builde It reports:

"that only 26 per cent. of companies in its sample are n working at full capacity, and puts the blame firmly upon combined effects of government restraint on public expendit and the imposition of VAT on alterations".

Therefore, the Government's proposals for further cuts capital spending by local authorities are not good news the construction industry.

Then there is the impact that this will have upon loc authorities. We are discussing yet another stage in t stop-go process of local authority capital programmes. T one thing that local authorities can be certain of complete uncertainty. They were lectured by Ministe about underspending. Indeed, they were lectured by t Prime Minister herself before the general election wh the Government were anxious to engineer some signs activity. Now that local authorities have gear themselves up in order to respond to that challenge th are threatened with penalties for alleged overspending.

Ministers have encouraged local authorities to s homes and land in order to build up their capital assets. recently as 18 July 1984 when the Secretary of State f the Environment announced some degree of restraint up

local authority capital expenditure, he was still encouraging local authorities to build up their capital assets. He said:

"This arrangement leaves every authority with the incentive to continue to make sales and so to add to the prescribed proportion of receipts which they will be free to spend."

He continued:

"In this way, they can spend without adding to net public expenditure."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1984; Vol. 64, c. 331.]

I suggest that that is a very different picture from the one that is being presented to the House today by the Minister. We ought to be very concerned about the impact of these cuts upon ordinary people.

I take first the council tenants. Many hon. Members understand the problems facing many large council estates, particularly those whose construction involved various forms of system building in the 1960s and the 1970s. It is wrong for Ministers to blame local authorities for the problems created by system building. Governments of all parties put pressure upon local authorities to adopt system building, saying that it would be cheaper and faster. It turned out to be neither and resulted in a product that has become unacceptable to the many tenants who are forced to live in that kind of housing.

I shall give one example from my own constituency, but I have no doubt that it is typical of the experience of many other hon. Members. The Morris Walk estate was erected in the 1960s. It was a system-built estate and received a design award, which tells us something about the attitude of architects towards system building in the 1960s. That estate is now plagued by worrying structural defects. It has major damp and condensation problems; it suffers from rotting window frames; there is an expensive and completely ineffective heating system which tempts far too many tenants to use calor gas, with all its associated risks in that kind of building. The tenants have campaigned for years for the sensible modernisation, improvement and rehabilitation of their homes. At last a start has been made on a couple of the blocks, yet the future of that rehabilitation programme is thrown into turmoil because of doubts about the continued availability of finance, even though the local authorities concerned have the required resources.

A number of estates in my constituency do not face such serious difficulties but need major rehabilitation work. Other estates do not need major improvement or repair, but their comparatively simple problems could be solved by, for example, the provision of entryphones to keep out the vandals and prevent the nuisances which plague so many council estates. Even that kind of modest programme is now thrown into uncertainty because of doubts about the availability of finance. Tenants find it very hard to understand why they should be required to go on living in what they, with great justification, regard as substandard conditions when the local authorities have the cash available to tackle the problem. I listened with great care to the Minister's explanation, but if he were to come with me to the Morris Walk estate and offer his explanation to my constituents he would get a very short, sharp and colourful response. I challenge him to try to explain to ordinary people the impact of the policies that he is advocating.

I turn to the impact of these cuts upon owner-occupiers, in particular the impact upon those owner-occupiers who were encouraged to buy old properties on the basis that repair, improvement and maintenance grants would be fairly readily available. I pay tribute to the way in which the Government boosted that programme before the general election in 1983. There was a very effective increase in the take-up of repair and improvement grants. In 1983 there was a 121 per cent. increase in the take-up, with 230,000 grants being made. However, as was pointed out in an earlier intervention, that took place before the general election of 1983. The picture now is very different. There are cash constraints. Repair grants are rationed in many local authorities. Many of those who are in the queue for repair grants have absolutely no chance of getting them because of the constraints upon the available resources. The National Home Improvement Council referred to this problem. It said:

"Financial constraints are also likely to force authorities to reduce the resources allocated to grant aid in the current financial year."

It continued:

"The prospects for subsequent years are no more encouraging, so that it is anticipated that the peak of activity generated by the boost to grants is now past."

That was said before the cuts which we are now debating. Therefore, the prospects for many owner-occupiers who believed that they would receive repair grants are not very good.

On the impact of the capital spending cuts upon the nation as a whole, I believe that there is general agreement that the work which will be delayed because of these capital spending cuts will have to be carried out at some time or another. I doubt whether the next generation will easily forgive us if we hand over to them an infrastructure that is shabby, seedy and down at heel. If the Minister considers that comment to be unfair or exaggerated, I suggest that he should consider the lifestyle of many of the ordinary citizens of this country. He should look at the quality of life that is inflicted upon them. He should consider the real position in many of our urban areas. Let him go to the south-east London area which my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and I represent. Let him look at the holes in the road, the broken paving stones, the boarded-up flats, the graffiti-covered walls and the vandalised facilities. A vast amount of new building, repair work and improvement needs to be carried out in terms of both housing and the infrastructure generally.

The construction industry is ready, willing and able to carry out the task. The construction industry could call upon a vast army of unemployed building trade workers to do the work. The local authorities have the cash in the bank to pay for the work. All that stands in its way is the Government's blind adherence to an incomprehensible economic dogma. That is why we shall support the motion tonight.

5.8 pm

Mr. Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe): When this matter was debated on 19 December 1984, I sought to support the Government's attitude on the basis that it was essential to keep interest rates as low as possible in order to enhance the general economic climate in which the wealth-creating private sector of our econony can operate. I believed it to be essential that interest rates should be kept as low as possible in order to create the maximum number of viable, lasting jobs in our economy, the kind of jobs which many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are accustomed to call real jobs. I am encouraged to find that the phrase "real jobs" appears in the Opposition

[Mr. Michael Howard]

motion. I hope that it marks an advance in their thinking and that they grasp the significance of the concept which underlies that phrase.

Since then, we have seen developments in interest rates which are not entirely helpful to the kind of developments that I am anxious to see in the furtherance of the Government's economic objectives. But that makes the need for the Government's policies more rather than less important. It reinforces the need for the kind of control which is exemplified in this policy and it makes it even more important that we do not give the impression on world markets that the Government's grip on the economy is weakening and that their strategy has lost the force which underlies the achievement of the objectives to which so many of us attach so much importance.

When we debated the matter last, the concern that was expressed by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends was based largely on the extent to which the Government's proposals were seen as interfering with the autonomy of local government. That matter was referred to by many during that debate and was touched upon by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) a few moments ago.

The Government's proposals mark no change in principle in the relationship between central and local government. During the debate that we had in December, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), who we are all sorry not to see in his place this evening , intervened to suggest that the way in which the matter was dealt with in the autumn statement would lead an interested reader of that document to suppose that the Government intended local authorities to be able to spend all the capital receipts which they received from the sale of council houses and other assets. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend had given the matter long and serious study before he made that intervention, but I am bound to say that his intervention smacked more of the kind of ingenious and imaginative improvisation of which the profession to which he and I belong are rightly proud than it did of long and serious study.

There has been a limit on the proportion of receipts from the sale of such assets which local authorities have been permitted to spend ever since the introduction of this system of control of local authority capital expenditure in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. This year, that prescribed proportion is 40 per cent. It is to be reduced next year and was previously 50 per cent. There has always been a limit on the proportion of receipts from sales which local authorities were able to spend.

If one goes back beyond the introduction of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, one finds that the control then exercised by Government over local authority spending and borrowing in such matters was even more restrictive. Before that Act, under the previous Labour Government, permission had to be sought project by project for such spending. It was control of a most restrictive and detailed kind and it was exercised on a detailed basis.

To those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who were tempted by the argument that the proposals represent an interference in the autonomy of local government, I would say that the introduction of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 marked a relaxation by the Government of the extent to which Government interfered in such matters; that ever since that Act has b introduced there has been contained in it a restrictio the proportion of receipts from the sale of capital a which local authorities have been permitted to spend, that therefore there can arise no conceivable questio principle in the Government's proposals.

That does not deal with the point which has feature so many of the contributions that have been mad today's debate. Those contributions have been concer rightly, with the effect of the Government's proposal the amount of money which can be spent on what undoubtedly the housing needs of large numbers of citizens.

There was something in what the hon. Member Woolwich said, when he recognised a common across the House, that much could be done and that m needs to be done to improve the housing conditions of people. Of course that is so. But equally it will avail people little if we seek to spend money now on purported objective of improving housing conditi when, by doing so, we damage the objectives of sustai growth and improvement in the economy. That mus the overriding objective. It is not impossible to explain to people.

The hon. Gentleman extended an invitation to my h Friend the Minister to visit a housing estate in constituency and explain the Government's policy to people. I can understand why he extended that invitati Those of us who are familiar with the activities of alliance in such matters know full well that it is not in business of trying to explain unpalatable truths to people whom we represent. It is in the business pretending to the people whom we represent that diffi choices do not exist; that there is some escape int political option where one does not have to cho between more or less public spending, more or taxation, more or less borrowing and higher or lo interest rates, and that all will be all right if only one tr the alliance. But it is not impossible to explain s matters to those whom we represent.

Undoubtedly, the district council which is con minous with my constituency would like to spend m money on housing next year than it is permitted to sp by the Government. As it happens, it is also true that it be permitted by the Government to spend more on hous than it is spending this year and more than it spent in ev year but one previously, particularly on rehabilitation improvement grants.

We have a duty to explain such matters to those wh we represent. They will understand and see, as they h done in the past and as they did at the election, that overriding objective to which we must address oursel is the creation of conditions in our economy which lead to a lasting improvement in the standard of living all our people. That will include an improvement housing conditions. They will see that it would be folly pursue policies at this moment which might lead to so short-term improvement in housing but which would lasting damage to the rest of the economy and in time housing as well. That is why I shall support Government in the Lobby tonight.

5.18 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The hon. learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howa said that there was no division in the House over so

objectives — and we all agree that we need a housing policy that will satisfy Britain's needs — but that we must relinquish those objectives in the short term until the longer-term economic objectives are achieved.

Labour Members, and, I suspect, many millions of people in the country, worry about when those long-term economic objectives will be realised. When I listened to the Minister and to the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe, I got the impression that we had not had a Conservative Government for the past six years and that they were doing their best to distance themselves from the Government. I can understand that. If I were a Conservative Member, I would want to do exactly the same.

There is a point in the life of the Government, perhaps six years is not too short a time, when Conservative Members must accept that they are partly responsible for the state of the country's economy, that they have some responsibility for the social objectives." They cannot say that they are not responsible for social objectives by pretending that they are meanwhile concentrating on maximising long-term economic objectives. Judging from the way that matters are progressing, we shall never achieve those long-term economic objectives.

I suspect that the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe introduced implicitly a novel political doctrine, which is that we go back on each occasion to the electorate and say "We failed miserably in all our economic policies, but we have the same social objectives as the Labour party and the alliance, so please give us another five years because just over the horizon is the achievement of those economic objectives. Give us a mandate again and we shall continue to work for those long-term economic objectives." The reality is that the realisation of those objectives will always be long term, and many of us think that they will never be realised. That is the backcloth to today's debate.

Mr. Robert Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is it not ironic that, although the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) believes that the objectives of the Government's economic policy should transcend even the needs of people living in squalor in many of our urban areas, no doubt he would support the profligate expenditure by the same Government on Trident, which the Secretary of State admits has increased in cost threefold or fourfold? What is the difference between the two?

Mr. Fatchett: I am pleased that I gave way to my hon. Friend, because he made an important point which I was just about to make myself.

The central point of the debate is that it emphasises the important difference between the parties on social and economic issues, and it lays bare the difference in terms of values.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) set out in great detail the national housing picture. It is a depressing one and it is reproduced in city after city. Sadly, it is reproduced in my own city of Leeds; a proud city now facing a multitude of housing problems.

In the city of Leeds, on 31 December last year we had 18,536 households on the waiting list. Of those, 1,200 qualified under the homeless persons legislation. An additional 3,006 households were in substandard housing or had special needs priorities. Those are depressing figures.

In addition, in the city of Leeds we have the problems of system-built housing, all the difficulties created by that type of housing, and all the difficulties created by the fact that we have a Government who are not prepared to finance the public sector in any meaningful sense to deal with the problems associated with system-building.

We in the city of Leeds made a major mistake. In September last year we invited the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to see the city's housing problems. That might be said to be a sensible way for any local authority to approach its problems — bring along the Minister responsible, show him the problems and try to persuade him that they will be alleviated only by injections of cash. The Secretary of State came in September. We took him to some of the inner city areas. He said, "It is dreadful. There are problems here." We thought that we had cracked it and that we had found a sympathetic Cabinet Minister who would listen to our problems.

We made a bid. Perhaps we were a bit ambitious, but we were encouraged by the right hon. Gentleman's sympathy. The bid was for £64 million as the housing investment programme allocation for 1985-86. Incidentally, that would only project forward in real terms the value of the HIP which the last Labour Government gave the city in 1978-79, so it was not extravagant. It was a sensible bid, based on the right hon. Gentleman's encouragement.

The Secretary of State has allocated £24·8 million to the city of Leeds, a reduction this year of between £2 million and £2·5 million. The Secretary of State came, he saw and he sympathised. But when it came to finance he did not care a damn about the problems of the city.

In terms of social values, the Government give housing a low priority. I have listened to the rhetoric of Ministers and their supporters on many occasions. The Government's record shows that they care little about homeless people, people on council house waiting lists and people living in system-built houses. They do not bother about them and they are not bothered about a great city such as Leeds. It is all a question of cuts, and further cuts, regardless of the social and personal misery involved.

In the last year of the Labour Government, we in the city of Leeds completed 1,700 houses in the public sector. In 1983-84 the figure was already down to 530. In this financial year we have a start of 101 new council houses. How can we solve the problems of the city with its waiting list when we have a new build programme of 101 houses?

The Minister will say that the Government are shifting resources away from the public sector into the private sector and that it is the private sector which will provide the houses so that the housing stock does not deteriorate. Looking at the national picture, we see that that is not the reality.

A comparison of the requirement for housing looked at on a national scale with private sector and public sector building combined demonstrates that we are well below our overall building requirement. The Minister is presiding over the decay of our housing stock. He says that the Government have made great efforts to help owner-occupiers in terms of improvement and repair grants, but

[Mr. Fatchett]

that is not the stark reality that we find in our surgeries and in the letters that we receive daily from people who have made applications for improvement and repair grants.

The reality in Leeds and many other parts of the country is that it is impossible to get a repair or an improvement grant, and people are going on to waiting lists. In my constituency, which is in an inner city area, there are large numbers of Victorian and Edwardian houses which need repair and renovation. Many of them are owner-occupied. Because of Government policies, those people have no hope. In terms of social values, we find that housing is given a low priority by the Government.

I am interested in the language of politics and the way in which the Conservative party likes to present its policies. The Conservatives say that they are the party of opportunity. They say that they are opening Britain's society so that the thrusters — people with ability and enterprise — can take the opportunities presented to them. The Prime Minister says again and again, "We are the enterprise and opportunity Government." How does that language of opportunity compare with the record of Britain's housing? It does not compare. What opportunity is there for a young couple in my constituency who want to move into a council house? What opportunity is there for an elderly couple who want to spend money on improving their house? What opportunity is there for those living in system-built houses with high heating bills caused simply by the nature of the original build?

In the minds of the Conservatives, the language of opportunity extends to a very small sector of society. The reality of opportunity in housing for the vast majority of people does not exist. The Government use opportunity, but they abuse the chances of opportunity for many thousands of people.

Mr. Gow: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would have denied the 800,000 former local authority tenants who were given the right to buy by the Government and bought their houses that opportunity?

Mr. Fatchett: I am interested in the fact that we have a Minister who has not only a myopic interpretation of his responsibilities as Minister for Housing, but a limited brief from his civil servants. There is more to housing policy than the right to buy a council house.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Answer the Minister.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall certainly answer the Minister, and I should love to hear the Minister answer some of our questions.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way, because I must answer the Minister's question.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Get on with it, then.

Mr. Fatchett: I do not wish to take on the apprentice boy when I have the craftsman.

We are talking about opportunity across the whole housing market. The Minister is responsible for owner-occupiers, people in need of improvement grants and people on waiting lists, but he is not looking after them. A housing policy should be more than the right to buy, and it is about time that the Government recognised that. As I believe in local autonomy and democracy, I would not force local authorities to sell council houses. That is a sensible argument. If the local electorate vote for councillors who believe in selling council houses, so be it, but that is their choice. It is no good the Minister smiling at that point, because we know the Government's record on local democracy. The Labour party believes in local democracy, but the Government do not, which is why they force a range of policies on local authorities.

I turn from the social implications of the Government's policy to questions of economic management. Time and again the Government tell us that they have expertise in managing the economy. Sometimes I wonder when they will display it. I guess that it is a covert expertise, which on some future occasion they will show to the public's advantage. Does it make economic sense for local authorities to be unable to plan on capital receipts from one year to another? Who would manage a business on that basis? The hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe said that receipts had been cut from 50 per cent. to 40 per cent. to 20 per cent., and seemed to find satisfaction in it. Perhaps it is part of the hair shirt of economic management, but, in reality, no local authority can manage its affairs if it does not know how much it will receive in capital receipts from year to year. The Secretary of State made his statement seven days before Christmas. That is during local authorities' budget season and gives them no time to plan ahead.

The Government talk about managing resources, but they are a Government of waste. The major criticism of the Government is that they are wasting natural resources when they need to be spent in ways which will be socially and economically beneficial. The Government preside over decay of the infrastructure, and, of many inner cities. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of skilled building trade workers are unemployed. Although the Government say that they do not believe in public spending, they are happy to spend £17 billion to keep people unemployed.

It does not need a great deal of imagination or political will to see that when we need money spent on the infrastructure and when our people have the necessary skills, we can match resources to people and satisfy the need. However, political will and intellectual commitment are needed to do that. The Government have neither the political will nor the intellectual commitment and ability to carry out that task. Until we have a Government with that sort of ability, the country will face further decay in our inner cities and in housing, and the homeless, those on council house waiting lists and the unemployed, who are unemployed simply because of the Government's disastrous policies, will face more and more misery.

5.34 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I was interested to listen to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). Towards the end of his speech he touched on an issue which worries me — that is, the ability of local authorities to manage their own affairs. For some time I have been deeply worried about Government interference in and attitude to local authorities. I speak as one who served for some years in local government, and as the parliamentary adviser to the Construction Plant Hire Association. Therefore, I am well aware of the deep problems facing that industry. I also speak on behalf of the area which I have the honour to represent.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Minister, who gave a robust explanation of the Government's decision on capital receipts, that I shall not join him in the Lobby tonight. I intend to abstain because I do not understand the logic behind the Government's decision regarding the capital expenditure and capital receipts of local authorities. My decision to abstain is also tied up with the rate support grant settlement. Once again it has heavily penalised my local authority, Macclesfield borough council. That burden is wholly contrary to the expectations which were raised in the undertakings given at the conclusion of last year's settlement.

I am trying to paint the reasons for not supporting the Government. Next year, my council will lose grant worth £370,000, irrespective of the amount that it now cannot spend from capital receipts. That is on top of a loss of about £186,000 for the present financial year. The officers and elected members of my authority confidently expected that the settlement this year would not have such a drastic effect on authorities which are, to use the Government's term, low spenders and have consistently followed Government policies on expenditure.

In support of its case, the council has followed policies which keep spending at or below target and well below the grant-related expenditure assessment figure; has had appreciable success in reducing staffing levels — 195 posts have gone during the past 10 years, which is a sizeable number for a non-metropolitan district council; keeps its own expenditure under careful scrutiny and control and at levels which have only increased some way below inflation; provides favourable comparative statistics on the costs of its services; provides its own value-for-money team in a constant search for greater economy and efficiency; has produced extremely favourable reports from its private auditors; and keeps within the Government's capital allocations. That is not a bad record for an authority, and I am glad that the Minister nods in agreement.

Macclesfield borough council has pursued central Government policies relating to public expenditure under both this and the previous Government. We believe that the House has a right to dictate, and that if it lays down laws the authority must carry them out. I am worried about many of the legislative measures that the Government are introducing, because they fail to realise the importance of local government. If local government is to have any meaning, it must be allowed to manage its own affairs.

My local authority's success is measured by its performance, which shows that its increase in rate levy during a 10-year period from 1974-75 to 1984-85 is only 13 per cent., as against an increase in the retail price index of more than 180 per cent. This year it will levy the lowest rate poundage in Cheshire for the ninth successive year.

Those achievements have taken place despite the increases in some services necessitated, as in many other areas, by demographic factors and, sadly, the imposition by Parliament of additional responsibilities. Once again, the council's expenditure will be below the rate of inflation. An increase of 3·7 per cent. is envisaged for the forthcoming year. Like all responsible authorities, the council wishes to do everything possible to avoid increasing the burden on the ratepayers, but increased efficiency and economy can no longer keep pace with the severe losses in grant compounded by the capital spending restrictions. Rates will have to be increased by about 12 per cent., 9·6 per cent. of which is a direct result of Government intervention and failure to honour commitments given at last year's rate support grant settlement. Only 2·4 per cent. reflects increased spending by the council.

Many other issues have already been raised. My council, too, will have to reduce considerably the money available for improvement grants. It is one of the few authorities in the north-west seeking to keep a vestige of its housing improvement scheme going. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has said that housing improvement grants in his area will be cut almost completely due to lack of resources. The growth and industry of Macclesfield formed part of the industrial revolution and there are many terraced houses which, as I know my hon. Friend the Minister agrees, could provide excellent homes not just for the elderly but for first-time buyers. Those houses are part of long-established, stable communities in towns such as Macclesfield, but they require urgent improvement and as a result of Government diktats the money will not be available. As a consequence, many may have to be demolished rather than improved and the cost of constructing new houses or improving those which remain when money becomes available by permission of the Government will be very much higher.

The Government's action in limiting the amount of receipts that can be spent means that Macclesfield council will have to reduce the number of local authority mortgages. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) suggests that local authorities have no right to be involved in the mortgage business, but the House has emphasised on many occasions the part that local authorities have to play in this respect. I remind my hon. Friend that local authorities are prepared to cover types of housing that building societies refuse to cover and those properties are very important to the communities in which they are located.

The Government's decision will also set back the capital programme for modernisation of council housing in Macclesfield, especially the important programme for the Moss estate, the oldest local authority housing estate in Macclesfield. When the authority housing account is awash with money it is quite wrong that work which will improve the standard of life for many of my constituents is not to be allowed to take place. I am extremely concerned about that, quite apart from the employment implications.

The borough council is now constructing only specialist accommodation for elderly persons. The leader of the council, Mrs. Margaret Duddy, and the Conservative group which controls it strongly oppose the Government's policy which has led to the shelving of two such projects for the elderly, despite the urgent need for them. When that accommodation is finally built, of course, the cost will be a great deal higher.

On the general rate capital fund, 30 per cent. of receipts can be spent. The allocation to Macclesfield this year, however, was only £520,000 on the general rate allocation fund. In addition, the council may spend 30 per cent. of its capital receipts, but the figure for next year—there is nothing that we can do about the year already past—has been reduced to £499,000. As a result, there will be no resources to provide a multi-storey car park. The cost of even a modest project is about £1 million and the borough council has plenty of money, but the Government say that it cannot use that money to fund its own projects.

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

The council has a fine reputation for good housekeeping and I challenge my hon. Friend the Minister to check that. It is building a new swimming pool as an extension of the excellent leisure centre which was built without borrowing one penny. The swimming pool project has been funded by a five-year covenant scheme organised through merchant bankers Morgan Grenfell. The council has been able to pay Morgan Grenfell as soon as bills are submitted by the contractors, thus avoiding any interest charges. From April this year, however, the council will not be allowed to use the money in its own bank account to pay Morgan Grenfell as and when bills are submitted by the contractors. As a result, the project will cost more—at the ratepayers' expense—and scarce resources will have to be used to pay interest charges which benefit no one but the banks.

The borough council has the resources to carry out all the projects that I have mentioned. The housing revenue account is currently being credited with about £750,000 per year from housing capital account interest. The account is awash with money. Council house rents will not be increased this year. I welcome that decision, as will all council tenants in the area. From the information that I have given, my hon. Friend the Minister will surely appreciate that a prudent, thrifty and responsible council is suffering in its ability to plan for the future due to ham-fisted Government policies which take no account of the good practice of that council over so many years, and the Department has figures to prove what I am saying.

As I have great respect for my hon. Friend the Minister, it is with regret that I must inform him that I shall not be supporting the Government in the Lobby today. My hon. Friend advanced a highly articulate case which may have a bearing on many authorities, but it has no relevance whatever to Macclesfield council, which manages its affairs so responsibly. Indeed, it is an insult to the elected councillors and the first-rate officers who serve the residents of the borough. I therefore ask my hon. Friend to look again at the difficult cases, many of which have been and will continue to be highlighted in this debate.

5.48 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). I spent three weeks in Macclesfield during the 1971 by-election campaign, seeking to ensure that the hon. Gentleman was not elected, but I welcome his statement that he will not support the Government today. I hope that, having heard the rest of this short debate, he and a number of other Conservative Members will have the courage to come into the Lobby with the Opposition and to vote against the Government. I sincerely believe that that is the only way to get the Government to think again on this vital issue.

Councils of all political persuasions throughout the country are critical of the Government over the capital allocations for the forthcoming year, particularly in regard to the spending of capital receipts. Even the friends of the Conservatives in industry are concerned about the consequences of the Government's proposals. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) referred to a document produced by the Building Employers Confederation. That is one of many examples of concern being expressed by industry and commerce about what the Government are doing.

On Saturday of last week I was speaking to a prominent member of the Conservative party in north-east Lancashire; until a few years ago he was the leader of an authority close to my constituency. His business is in the construction industry and he made it clear to me that the Government's action would force many building companies, though not his, out of existence, which in turn would put people out of work. There are, therefore, those two aspects: first, we shall not be able to deal with the problems facing local government and, secondly, we shall add to the number of people unemployed.

Nationally, the proposal for next year involves cuts of over £1 billion in housing provision. That, in cash terms, represents a spending cut of 19 per cent. Urgently required housing programmes involving new build, sheltered housing, improvement and repair grants and even mandatory grants will be threatened in some areas.

The forecast of additional unemployment in the housing sphere alone arising from the Government's proposals is between 75,000 and 150,000. For the whole of the capital programme for 1985-86, the Government have projected a 28 per cent. cut, from £5·1 billion to £3·8 billion. It is a cut almost too serious to contemplate.

A large part of capital spending occurs in the private sector, not within local authorities' direct works departments. Even councils which win contracts—for improvement work or new build — must purchase materials, and that in turn provides work for the private sector. No wonder private companies in the industry are concerned about what will happen as a result of the cuts.

People in industry find it surprising that councils do not know, until a late stage, the extent of their capital programmes. That means that many councils cannot plan ahead sufficiently far to be properly viable. Compared with that situation, most industries work on a five-year rolling programme and are thus able to plan well ahead.

The Minister may say that councils have been assured of 80 per cent. of expenditure so long as they comply with certain guidelines and do not defy Government policy. That will not be sufficient and, in any event, it will give them only one third of what they really require.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) dealt with two important issues. First, he said that the Secretary of State had visited his area. We in Burnley did not get the Secretary of State; we got the Minister for Housing and Construction. He examined the housing problems in my constituency in the public and private sectors. He saw some of the major problems facing the borough council and expressed considerable sympathy. Unfortunately, that sympathy has not been matched with allocations which will enable the authority to deal with its problems. We gave the Minister a potato pie lunch. In view of the response from the Department, he would be lucky now to get a biscuit. I hope that he will bear in mind the difficulties that we face locally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central referred, secondly, to council house sales. The Government tend to hold these sales up as a glowing solution to the housing problem. My position is clear: I am opposed to the compulsory sale of council houses. I am not opposed to people buying their own homes—indeed, I would give every encouragement to foster home ownership — but every local council should have the right to determine its policy on council house sales according to local circumstances.

Even if one accepts the Government's view that everybody should have the right to buy, that right is not the answer for many people who live in council houses. The elderly, the unemployed and many others will never have the opportunity in their lifetime to buy the property in which they live, so the right-to-buy policy holds no attraction for them.

That policy creates a problem for them and for local authorities. In my area we have sold almost 1,000 council houses, but an examination of the places in which they have been sold shows that we have sold almost none on the problem estates. On the attractive estates, on the other hand, large numbers of properties have been sold. Indeed, we are rapidly reaching the position when, on some of those estates, 50 per cent. of the properties will be in private occupation.

That means that people living in less favourable houses have a slim chance of getting transferred to more decent accommodation. I accept, as I said, that people should have the right to buy—I would hope that everybody could buy their own homes—but perhaps we should try to assist people to move out of council houses so that others may have the opportunity to move into better homes.

Because of the way in which subsidies have been changed, financial burdens and other problems have been forced on to council tenants, with the rents charged to those who are not in receipt of housing benefit reaching massive levels. The way in which the Government have dealt with housing revenue accounts means that people who do not buy the property in which they live, if they are in a position to buy are silly because the financial attraction to buy is so great. But not everybody would want to buy if there was parity of treatment between people in the private sector and those living in municipal housing.

Mr. Heddle: The hon. Gentleman said that he accepted that people had the right to buy, and I am sure that *Hansard* will record faithfully his comments about that. So that his opponent at the next election may be sure where he stands in the matter, will he confirm that if people have the right to buy the council in those circumstances has a duty to sell?

Mr. Pike: I did not quite use the words that the hon. Gentleman attributes to me. I said that I believed that people had the right to buy their own houses, but I went on clearly to say that the policy of selling council houses should be determined at local level. Of course people have the right to buy their houses, but councils should not be forced to sell. My local council may now wish to sell its houses because it now has empty properties — this applies in the public and private sectors—because of the large number of people who have moved away from the town due to lack of employment.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): My hon. Friend must not be tempted by the titillating observations of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) to enter into an argument on the right to buy and the right to sell. The bone of contention is that the right to buy exists. The accumulated reserves referred to in the motion are the reserves of capital receipts arising from the right to buy. If the proportion of capital reserves for the provision of new housing was not limited, the proposal would be to bring men and materials together to provide new houses to meet what authorities judged to be their needs. Therefore, that would not affect the economy adversely. If that is conceded, the Minister's case for restricting the proportion is lost.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend has made a valuable point. Many people accept the Government's case that capital receipts have an effect on the public sector borrowing requirement; many others disagree with that. Certainly I do not share the view that capital receipts should be restricted in that way.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) spoke about transferring mortgages from councils to building societies. When I was leader of Burnley council we tried to transfer our mortgages to the National Provincial building society—or the Burnley, as it was at that time. After considerable resistance from the Government, ultimately we got their agreement to that transfer. It was done on a voluntary basis. Obviously, if people were getting a cheaper interest rate it was sensible for them to take up the option to transfer. It was also to the advantage of the council because, instead of getting capital in dribs and drabs, it got it all in one go. That should be done wherever possible, but it is nonsense to do it if the council cannot use the receipts.

I hope the Minister will refer in his reply to what St. Albans council has done, as reported in the press this week. It has transferred its mortgages to a merchant banker for a commission fee. There has been a cash exchange, with no interest paid. This will give the council the right to use the money. I do not know all the details, but no doubt the Minister and his Department are aware of them, and he should comment on that arrangement.

Burnley's HIP bid for 1985-86 was £10,793,000 and the allocation was £4,288,000 — a reduction of £1 million on this year. The amount we got this year was completely inadequate. We shall have a shortfall next year of at least £6·5 million. When the council prepared that bid, it was a realistic bid which did not go over the top.

We have many houses in Burnley which need improvement. We have over 1,000 pre-war council houses that the council cannot do anything about. There are many houses in the private sector which need improvement, but the council cannot give the necessary grants. A particular problem arises where people were given prior approval for work to be done because of its urgent nature and they cannot get the money to pay the bills. That must be of concern to the Minister.

In regard to other services, we bid for £2,044,000 and the allocation was £401,000. Even at this stage, next year's urban aid allocation is not known, so we cannot plan ahead. The derelict land reclamation figures have not yet been finalised for next year. The Inland Revenue is reported to want retrospective legislation which would have the effect of altering the present leasing arrangements. Again, that could have disastrous effects for local government.

The council has had consultations with the chamber of commerce and industry, no great ally of the Labour party. It made three points on the Burnley budget. First, it failed to understand the logic of keeping back capital receipts, which are limited to 20 per cent. Secondly, it clearly understood the injustice to the local ratepayers of withdrawing in effect a 5p rate due to the general reduction in rate support grant to just over 48 per cent. Thirdly, it felt that the local authority, like a private sector company, should be able to plan over a longer period than one year.

[Mr. Pike]

These are the problems that local government faces. In addition to my authority's problem, Lancashire county council has £2 million of capital receipts which it cannot use. This causes major problems. The Government should think again. I hope that many hon. Members, like the hon. Member for Macclesfield, will join us in the Lobby tonight.

6.5 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I understand and believe that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) cares for the needs of his constituents, just as the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) cares for the needs and requirements of his. I only wish that Opposition Members would appreciate that we on the Conservative side also care for the needs and requirements of our constituents. If they were to examine objectively the provision of Conservative local authority areas compared with Labour local authority areas they would find that not only do we care but that we actually provide.

The Opposition have another motivation. They are hooked on public money to sustain and expand the Socialist republics, the very leaders of which are on the management committees that are responsible for the reselection of many Labour Members.

I note a correspondence between depressed areas and Socialism. Where there is Socialism there is a depressed area, and where there is a depressed area there is Socialism. I am not sure which comes first, which is the chicken and which is the egg, but many Socialist areas have a vested interest in the dependence of their clients and their constituents and a vested interest in continued depression in the area so that they can climb on the back of the poverty of their people to try to get back to the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose——*

Mr. Marlow: I am afraid there is not time for me to give way.

Some of my hon. Friends are concerned about the Government's approach to local authority capital expenditure, but they are also concerned about the level of public expenditure. They know that public expenditure increases, either taxation increases or interest rates increase and the economic problems of the country increase. Some of my hon. Friends believe that there is a particular virtue in local authority capital expenditure. I would agree that if we can cut local authority revenue expenditure we should spend more on capital, but an increase in local authority capital expenditure does not produce more jobs than leaving that money with industry and with the productive sector of the economy.

Another point that those few of my hon. Friends who are concerned about the issue have passed by and have not yet noticed is that the infrastructure is being improved. We are spending more on all areas of infrastructure, except for one area, public sector housing. I wonder sometimes what it is that concerns some of my hon. Friends. Of course, many of them had a background in local government. Somewhere in the back of their minds there is this love affair with their first political institution, local government. What they want the Government to produce above all is a land fit for local government to live in. It is far more important that we should produce a land fit for our people to live in.

In some local authority areas some of our people are appallingly abused. Some of the areas that have Left-wing Labour local authorities look upon local government not as an opportunity to provide services for the people who are their constituents but as a platform for propaganda and social engineering. They have a cynical and complete disregard for the people under their charge. They are concerned with revolution, and heaven help the casualties among those for whom they have responsibility.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood) *rose——*

Mr. Marlow: No, I shall not give way. Time does not permit me to do so.

Mr. Fraser: The hon. Gentleman was prepared to give way to me yesterday.

Mr. Marlow: Yes, but the circumstances today are quite different, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

I think that there is a growing awareness that in any area of public endeavour there is growing a more recognisable conflict between the interests of the public sector unions and the interests and needs of those who live in the area. Increasingly the needs of the local people are being put on one side. In many areas of local government we should strive towards giving it the responsibility mainly to regulate and control services within its area. However, the services should be provided by the private sector and not by local government.

Local authority housing has been perhaps the greatest human and environmental disaster that Britain has seen since the war. Those who doubt that should go abroad and compare the urban and inner city areas of other countries in the European Community with like areas in Britain. They will find that the housing that is provided in other member states is provided partly by municipal means but mainly by the private sector. We should compare the environment in those areas with that of our own. It is clear that something has gone wrong somewhere.

What has gone wrong? First, local government housing has now outgrown its strength. After the war the average local authority was responsible for about 1,400 houses. It is now responsible, on average, for about 14,000 houses. It is manifest that in many areas—I accept that this cannot be said of all areas — authorities have not retained the ability to control, manage and look after housing under their control.

Another problem has been the politicisation of local authorities. There were times when councils were Labour-controlled and sometimes Conservative-controlled but, whatever their complexion, they were concerned mainly with the needs of those in their areas. Politics has taken over with a vengeance.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) spoke about Lambeth recently. He knows as well as I do that Lambeth raises £35 million a year in rents and that it costs the borough £135 million a year to run, manage and finance its housing. That means that the taxpayer and the ratepayer has to make up £100 million. At the same time Lambeth proudly prepares expensive glossy pamphlets proclaiming this fact which it has the cheek to put through people's doors.

Let us give credit to Lambeth where credit is due.

Mr. Fraser: The Lambeth council gave the hon. Gentleman a grant.

Mr. Marlow: That is a silly point.

Over the past year the number of void houses in Lambeth has been reduced. A comparison should be made with Liverpool. In Liverpool, virtually one house in 10 is void. There are twice as many voids in Liverpool as in Birmingham—I pay credit to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) — and Birmingham has about twice as many houses in its area as Liverpool. Surely there is a lesson to be learnt there somewhere. Someone is getting it wrong. Someone is causing mischief in this area.

We all know that there are severe problems of homelessness, inadequate housing and lack of housing for the elderly. We all want to do something about these problems. However, we have got the formula wrong. The public sector housing formula is wrong. Rate controls and political vindictiveness towards the private sector have got the private sector wrong as well.

Mr. John Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: No, I shall not give way for the reason that I have already given.

I believe that there is a solution to the problem and that the Government, in all our interests, are moving courageously towards it. The solution lies in moving towards privatisation. This has been done successfully elsewhere in the economy. It has been successful for those for whom services are provided and for those who operate the provision of the services. We are moving towards privatisation. This is not confined to the sale of council houses. I mean more than that. We are moving towards privatisation in housing. We want to introduce private skills and capital. We want to introduce professionalism as far and as fast as we can into the housing sector for the benefit of those who need houses and not for political reasons. People have suffered so badly in some of our city areas and in some of our Socialist republics since the war. In many areas conditions are getting worse rather than better. However, there have recently been valuable developments.

The hon. Member for Burnley wants to know what to do about housing in his constituency. He should take a look at Stockbridge village, where there are 3,000 houses. The private sector has been brought in. A trust has been set up and the environment has been improved. We should move in that direction. There is the way forward. That is where help lies.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman is not comparing like with like.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction will be aware that it is the policy of some local authorities—it does not matter whether they are Conservative or Labour controlled—to help those who live within the area. They have done what they can to help them. They have sold off some of the tower blocks and deck-access housing to private sector companies, which have developed them and produced decent, reasonable housing from slums. That is the way in which we want to go.

We should encourage the private sector of housing to help produce accommodation for the elderly, single people and one-parent families. It has the skills and it will do it if it is given the opportunity to do so. It will provide a better environment and better housing than at present. The tragedy is that Labour Members do not embrace this policy for they are concerned as Conservative Members to provide the housing that is needed. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction that the time may come when we shall have to remove the roadblocks which are being erected to prevent improvement. At some stage we may need to ask local authorities to move some of their housing estates across to the private sector. Of course, they would have to be moved to licensed companies and there should be a great deal of control and restraint in terms of housing allocation, standards and a commitment to make improvements. Such companies may well be able to provide a better solution than some of the appalling results that we have now.

6.16 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I, too, understand that all right hon. and hon. Members are concerned about housing. If they make that claim, I am prepared to accept it.

The general tone of the debate, and especially the speech of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), has suggested that privatisation offers the simple solution and that if it is implemented all our problems will go away. If the hon. Gentleman lived in the area that I represent, he would know that the private sector is suffering as much as the public sector. In many instances the standard of accommodation in the private sector is much worse than in the public sector. There are many examples of the private sector pleading with the local authority to help it out with improvement grants or the purchase of large private blocks of flats.

It must be understood that the massive cut in the capital programme and restrictions on capital receipts has had a drastic effect on housing and other services across the board. Sheffield's capital receipts reduction amounts to £8 million and it will lose £3 million in grant. That means that it will lose £11 million in total. That cannot be found overnight from another source, and at the same time plans cannot be changed overnight to take account of the reduction. This has meant that the Sheffield housing programme is over-committed.

Conservative Members may ask, "Why did you over-commit?" The simple answer is that the Government have requested local authorities in the past to plan ahead. Having planned ahead, Sheffield is in the ludicrous position of being over-committed. Like many other authorities, it is still asking the Government to think again and to redress the balance.

It is not so long ago that the Minister for Housing and Construction visited Sheffield. After a good visit and a good debate he conceded that work had to be done almost immediately on some of Sheffield's housing stock, especially on dangerous blocks of flats. We all agreed that it should be done and everyone went away happy, thinking that something would be done.

But what happened? The result was the very opposite of that which we hoped would follow from the Minister's visit. Sheffield received less in capital grants and allocation and now we have lost the flexibility that is provided by capital receipts. This means that the city cannot service the areas which it, and the Government know are priorities because of the dangers they pose.

Ministers and the city council have agreed that those living in the Broomhall flats should be decanted to other

[Mr. Bill Michie]

properties. That presents a difficulty, as we cannot achieve much new build in Sheffield. It has been agreed also that the flats should be demolished once those living in them have been decanted. The bill for demolishing one block of flats at Broomhall is £1 million. That, of course, does not include the costs of finding alternative accommodation and building new housing for those who are still on the waiting list.

There has been a massive cut in the housing improvement programme for the private sector. This has had an effect on many elderly people who need adaptations to their homes and on many who feel that their present accommodation is not conducive to good health. These people are in desperate need of Government money to allow improvements to be carried out.

The massive capital allocation reduction and lack of flexibility in the use of capital receipts has caused a ripple effect upon services such as the social services which look after children in need, those in bad housing, the disabled, infirm and old. We cannot help that department because of the drastic cut in the use of capital receipts. The department has a capital development programme of £658,000. That is less than half last year's allocation. How can a council carry out its statutory obligations if such arbitrary cuts in capital receipts and allowances are made? The amount of £480,000 already allocated to those services leaves only £178,000 for Sheffield to deal with all the problems of the old, the infirm and others.

I am sure that all hon. Members receive details of sad cases every week where a little money spent in the private sector would make life much easier for people living in difficult accommodation whose problems are made worse by infirmity or old age.

The cuts affect building adaptations. The cuts will mean that some non-statutory projects will be shelved. That is important in homes where the chief fire officer has recommended that fire precautions should be taken. Although those are non-statutory obligations, I am sure that no hon. Member will disagree that it would be foolish to ignore the chief fire officer when he talks about property lived in largely by children, the infirm or the old.

I have studied the report of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. I cannot understand why Sheffield's allocation is so low and why it has been so severely affected compared with other local authorities. One argument that I have seen used in the press to justify the overall reduction from £116 million to £70 million was the persistent underspending on social services throughout the country. That does not apply to Sheffield, so I do not understand why it has been so heavily penalised.

There appears to be no logical relationship between the proposals for reductions and the size of the authority. The decision does not seem to have been taken on account of need or size of population in a place such as Sheffield. I can only speculate that the allocation relates to contracts already let. If that is the case, I am mystified as to the rationale, because the Secretary of State requested us to hold back on letting contracts during the latter part of 1984-85 to keep within his expenditure targets.

Sheffield has made no formal representation other than what I am saying. The cuts will not just affect the electorate, in particular those in need; they will affect jobs. Jobs will be lost in old people's homes. At least 100 jobs will be lost in Sheffield.

I would appreciate it if the Minister were to ta cognisance of the points and anomalies that I ha mentioned. Increased strains will be placed upon housi and social service officers. I ask him to reconsider t proposals, but if he feels that he cannot, will he at le think more about their implications and offer a much mo realistic and fairer allocation to authorities such Sheffield? If the Secretary of State cannot do that, will meet the members of Sheffield's committees and some the users of the services? There is all-party support Sheffield for what I am saying. That is how serious t matter is. I hope that the Minister will take those matt on board and consider them more realistically in the ne future.

6.24 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I support entirely t need to curb public borrowing for the reasons that my ho Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Hedd expounded so eloquently. I accept entirely the need to u a proportion of capital receipts prudently to invest a generate interest to be offset against local author borrowing. What is in question is the level of permitt expenditure. It is an issue of degree, not of principle. the level of permitted expenditure in any one year is t low, under-utilised assets will not be sold, the capi receipts will not be generated and the policy will counter-productive. That is the position in which we fi ourselves today.

If my hon. Friend the Minister is lucky enough to ha an heirloom in his attic worth £200 and needs a n washing machine but cannot afford it, he may sell heirloom to buy the washing machine. If he can generate enough revenue from the sale, he may not ma the purchase. In that case he would not make the sale do not believe that he would sell the heirloom to redu his overdraft.

It may be parochial, but my local authority is in t position. There is a leisure plan for Thanet which stat

"The current financial situation, which has imposed a virt stand-still on expenditure, is probably the most important rea for the formulation of a Leisure Plan. Given clear guidelin which create a settled situation, and a corporate approach, Council could achieve a great deal by making the most of w it has got."

Before Opposition Members make too much of reference to the "financial situation", I should tell th that that report was written in 1976.

My local authority has, as have many others, the fam heirlooms—properties and long leases—that could should be sold. If the amount of money generated by th sales and available for use on pet projects is insufficie the properties and leases will not be sold. I theref believe that the present balance is wrong and that policy will be counter-productive.

My constituency has an above average number elderly people living in under-occupied public and priv sector houses. Many of them wish to move to shelte housing. It is desirable to use capital receipts to bu sheltered housing for one reason only. My hon. Friend Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said t he believes it desirable that housing should be built by private and not the public sector. I endorse his sentimer except on one point. The elderly people about whom are talking have been living in public sector accommo tion for a long time. Many of them are too old to cha

their ways. There is a need for sheltered housing. Were the money available to build it, we should be able to release properties for greater use and for sale.

I wish to deal with mortgages. Each of my two local authorities has about £9·5 million on mortgage. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire that those mortgages should not be in the public sector but should be made available to be bought by the private sector. However, some of those mortgages will have been extended on properties on which building societies would not normally extend mortgages. Unless the receipts from such a handover are sufficient to encourage local authorities to change, I believe that they would sooner sit on the money.

I regret that I shall be unable to join my hon. Friend the Minister in the Lobby tonight because I believe that we have the balance, although not the policy, wrong.

6.29 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I intend to support the Government in the Lobby tonight because I believe that their position is a reasonable one based on a mix of need, expectation and national good housekeeping. I fear that a fixed percentage use of capital receipts is not necessarily right or fair for all authorities, but I understand the complications and difficulties of trying to apply different percentages in different parts of the country. I understand and acknowledge the deep concern for the construction industry of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), and the impatience of many local authorities which have projects, some good and some bad, in the pipeline.

The motion and the amendment refer to local authorities' own money, a phrase that has been repeated on a number of occasions. Far be it from this lesser Member to question his betters, but it should be remembered that much of that money—in some cases as much as 60 per cent. — has come from central Government finance for housing. Therefore, while the ownership of those reserves does not change, at least some moral substance is given to central Government's right to decide how it should be spent and at what rate.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned the problem of stop-go. I agree that the construction industry wants not stop-go but long-term stability and planning. I suggest that the spread of capital receipts tends to give some steadiness and underpinning to a council's spending pattern over the years when its right to borrow may fluctuate and cause precisely the stop-go mentioned by the hon. Member for Perry Barr.

The hon. Member also drew the House's attention to slum clearance programmes. I understand that this will vary from town to town. In Nottingham, which is no small city—300,000 people—by party agreement the city's slum programme ended in 1979-80. Inevitably, the statistics of new build now look sad compared with the new build before the completion of that programme. That is no criticism of either of the two parties which have been in control of the city of Nottingham. Indeed, it is precisely that problem that results in the involvement of the House and many other bodies in the silly numbers game of seeking to use new starts, and particularly new starts in the public sector, as a measure of whether an authority is good or bad.

We should consider the problem of what I might describe as political waste among local authorities in this respect. In Nottingham, there is a 17·5 acre site on which 250 homes could be built. It has been lying idle for five years because the local Labour-controlled council decided that it was not prepared to allow private houses and private building on it. It wanted public sector housing.

The council compounds its financial problems. There are two major blocks of system-built homes. The council had an opportunity to conserve its capital, its plans and the two buildings, Balloon Woods and Basford. A city publication says:

> "Demolishing the Balloon Woods and the old Basford flats was budgeted in the sums of £558,419 and £1,072,700 respectively."

As several hon. Members have said, the local authority, awash with housing money, is spending that amount to demolish those sites, and has turned down offers from the private sector to pay £250,000 to the city, thereby saving £1,750,000 in a single stroke, and to build homes for sale on those two sites. However, for political reasons that is turned down.

There is the other side to the coin of not spending capital receipts too quickly. Here I regret that I have to differ from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). The Nottingham local authority, when it embarked on voluntary house sales before the right to buy, decided that it wanted to be the building society. It was a deliberate act of the council. We never denied people the right to go to the building society, but there were benefits flowing to the city if it acted as a building society also. This spread over a greater number of years both the income in terms of interest benefit and the benefits from capital receipts.

The city has had the following benefits. The gross expenditure of the local authority is £130·5 million. The net rate levied is £9·2 million. As a result of the investment of capital receipts, the interest benefit flowing to the city is £10·5 million, over £1 million greater than the amount levied in rates. The present controlling Labour group would like to blow the capital receipts in a spending spree over two or three years. That would double the city rate without taking into account any other factor. The housing revenue account receives £8·2 million-worth of interest benefit in its total budget of £44·4 million. To every tenant in the city—approximately 47,000 homes are managed by the local authority in the city of Nottingham—this is worth £3·50 per week.

While I understand and sympathise with the pressure for more spending and for a greater percentage use of capital receipts, there is another side of the coin. The rates in Nottingham are half what they would otherwise be and the rents are £3·50 per week lower because of the retention of those capital receipts.

6.36 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): It is my intention to sit down promptly at 6.40 pm. I therefore concede that there is not much time in which to develop an argument which would satisfy either me or the House. There is time only to pinpoint the nature of the problem and to state that 1 million houses are in a state of disrepair. Over 1 million houses are not up to modern standards of amenity provision to provide decent living conditions for families, and over 500,000 people live in overcrowded conditions.

Each local authority knows specifically, much better than the Government and the House do, the needs of its own people. That is the enormity of the problem and the

[Mr. Ted Leadbitter]

specific understanding, which is at the service of the House, of local authorities, who know their business best. They know the nature of their requirements for housing in four-bedroomed houses, maisonettes and bungalows, including adequate provision for old people and invalids, and on that knowledge the Government should place considerable reliance.

Because of the right to buy, capital receipts have been pouring into the coffers of local authorities, and, with accumulated reserves of over £5 billion, there is one simple question that we should ask. If it is easy to bring together materials and unemployed people in the construction industry to produce houses for people to live in, how, in terms of capital expenditure considerations at the national level, does that adversely affect the economy? It cannot do so. It enriches the economy. The potential for production arises from the health and proper housing of people.

As a conscientious man, the Minister will realise, I hope, that I have put forward the problem briefly and in a proper spirit. If he cannot show how the economy will be adversely affected by bringing men and materials together when there are the capital resources to do it, will he answer this question: if the restriction of the proportion of capital receipts is a matter for determination by the Government, how does he justify it?

6.40 pm

Mr. Rooker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might reply to the debate.

The Minister could have come to the debate today and said, "There are half a million families who have outside toilets. As a special concession to them, we shall give them inside toilets before the next general election." The Minister could have given a special concession to the half a million families who have no hot and cold running water systems. He could have promised them hot and cold running water before the next election. Instead of doing that, the Minister has come here to tough it out. That is basically the Government's position.

I pay tribute to the hon. Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). They are the only two Conservative Members out of 74 who signed the early-day motion who have been in the Chamber today and risen to their feet. They have made it clear that they will not support the Government. We shall be watching what the other 72 hon. Members do at 7 pm. *[Interruption.]* Every hon. Member is accountable to his constituents. No one put a gun to the heads of the 74 Conservative Members to make them sign the early-day motion. They have all been to see the building employers. Some building employers have told me, "Our Member is doing what he can. He is going to see the Ministers. He has signed a motion in the House of Commons." But when those hon. Members are given the opportunity to vote with their feet in favour of the motion they signed, most of them are not taking that opportunity.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley) *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I shall not give way.

In 1977 the Labour Government, with the approval of the Opposition, changed the arrangements for nationalised industry capital spending. Up to then we were counting as public expenditure the whole of capital investment in the nationalised industries, including that part financed fro internal resources. That was a crazy arrangement and o of line with the practice of other Governments in t European Community. The new arrangement has not be changed by the Conservative Government since they ca to office. Why can we not do the same for loc authorities? Why do we have to count as publ expenditure all the capital expenditure, including th generated from within their own resources? Will t Minister see what can be done to bring local authoriti into line as nearly as possible with the treatment nationalised industries?

In my opening speech, when I referred to loc authorities, I neglected to give a quotation from t London borough of Waltham Forest — not Labou controlled. On 10 January 1985 the council passed t following resolution:

"The Council condemns the Secretary of State for t Environment's proposal to restrict the spending of capi receipts which represents a further attack on local decisi making. We support the Local Authority Associatio opposition to this proposal, and request the three Members Parliament representing constituencies of this borough to vo against the Order when it is presented to Parliament."

The local authority in the constituency of the Secretary State for Trade and Industry is asking him to vote again the order. In other words, the principle involv transcends some of the arguments of Conservati Members.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (M Marlow), towards the end of his speech, made ma sensible points which would find favour with Labo Members, but the first part of his speech was a tirade abuse against local authorities just because they we Labour-controlled. The fact that they might be doi something right seemed to be irrelevant for him.

I have particularly sought to highlight what Tor controlled authorities are saying about the proposal. F from weakening my case, it must strengthen it. We a dealing with an attack on local decision making. Th money is there to be spent. It has been generated by change of policy approved by this House since 1980. Th means that many of the old arguments are no longer vali Before 1980, for reasons that we all know, the capit receipts were not available on the necessary scale. referred earlier to the Prime Minister's assurance that th money could be used to replace capital assets, in particul with regard to the elderly.

Employers have a vested interest in the questi because of their businesses. This is a debate, not abo public housing, but about the use of capital receipts b local authorities for public housing, voluntary housing a private housing. That is what the argument is abou despite the usual smokescreen from one or two ho Members.

We have had a letter from the Building Employe Confederation telling us:

"Total local authority capital spending in 1985-86 could f to £3·8 million, a 28 per cent. reduction from this year's expect £5·1 billion. Such a massive reduction in workload would cau grave problems for the construction industry and could lead the loss of more than 150,000 jobs."

That is what is said on behalf of people who are involv in building, refurbishing and improving housing in th private, public and voluntary sectors.

We have had a letter from the British Aggrega Construction Materials Industries organisation telling u

"despite the collective overspend by local authorities in 1983-84 and 1984-85, local capital spending in 1984-85 is less in cash than it was in 1979-80—representing a 40 per cent. real fall. If local authorities adhere to the Government's plans for £2·2 billion for capital spending in 1985-86, this would mean that local investment would be 60 per cent. down on the 1979-80 real level."

It is no good going back to what happened under previous Governments. Expenditure has been cut and cut again, even in relation to the levels inherited by the Government.

I mentioned earlier the survey by the Institute of Housing. Every sentence in the survey comes from a local authority. All the comments deal with the cut that we are discussing. Under the heading "Elderly/Disabled", the following sentences appear:

"One elderly scheme cancelled for sheltered . . . 100 units cut to 31 for sheltered . . . Elderly programme deferred . . . No new elderly or disabled starts."

Under the heading "Modernisation/Rehabilitation/ Capitalised Repairs", it says:

"Adaptations for disabled deferred . . . No new improvement contracts . . . Fire prevention schemes for flats, water mains renewal, re-wiring, re-roofing postponed."

Under the heading "Defective Dwellings", it says:

"Cannot meet legal requirements under Defects Act . . . 500 defective dwellings untouched . . . Cutback on asbestos removal."

Under the heading "Improvement Grants", it says:

"4,000 on list, 4-5 years before process applications . . . 6,500 on list, none removed."

Under "Build for Sale/Low Cost Home Ownership Etc", it says:

"Leasehold scheme for elderly cancelled."

I should like to know what the Minister thinks about that.

Under "Housing Association Funding", it says:

"Stopped. Stopped new build 90 dwellings. Stopped. 2 projects postponed. Heavily affected."

Under "Slum Clearance" it says:

"Deferred. Slum clearance affected."

Under "Mortgages" it says:

"All but RTB mortgages stopped. Excluded from programme. Reduced. Loans for house purchase no longer available from council."

Those are sentences picked out at random from hundreds of sentences provided by the Institute of Housing as a result of its survey. They are directly related to the cut.

The Building Employers Confederation is in the numbers game, and I do not blame it for that. Of course, we are in the numbers game; we are talking about homes for people. The confederation has made it clear that there has been a disturbing shortfall of 100,000 new homes in each of the past seven years. The Minister mentioned completions; I have been quoting starts. I do not argue about that; we have to look at the different years. The Building Employers Confederation, in its latest note to Members of Parliament, said that in 1984 only 190,000 houses were completed, compared with an average of 304,000 per annum in the 1970s.

If the slum clearance programme and the new build programme are reduced, we demand an increase each year in the improvement and renovation schemes. We do not want a cut. I shall not reiterate my earlier arguments. It makes no sense to have the building programme and the slum clearance programme reduced, and now to have reductions in improvement grants, and we are storing up a crisis of massive proportions for our constituents. Ministers are not ignorant of that, and we are merely asking them to start facing it.

6.49 pm

Mr. Gow: With the leave of the House, I should like to respond to the debate. Thirteen hon. Members have spoken and I should like to answer the points that they have raised. If, in the time available to me, I am unable to answer all of their questions, I shall be happy to write to them.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) raised a constituency matter. Arrangements have been made to monitor the houses above Cow Pasture mine. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has asked the limestone expert panel which advises on limestone matters for its view on the consultant's proposals for extending the scope of the present monitoring arrangements. The panel will visit the site tomorrow.

Subject to advice from the panel, my hon. Friend is ready to authorise the use of derelict land grant for the additional monitoring work. The Government have already provided £3·6 million for limestone investigations in the west midlands and for the development of methods of tackling the problem. For 1985-86 my hon. Friend has increased the allocation to £2·6 million—£600,000 more than for the previous year. I know how worried the hon. Lady is, and it goes without saying that I shall be pleased to discuss the matter further with her. Moreover, if she would like to bring representatives of her council to see my hon. Friend or me, of course we shall be glad to see her and them.

The financial consequences of spending the accumulated receipts of local authorities, which have resulted from the outstanding success of our policy of selling council houses, has been a continuing part of the debate. Local authorities' external debts total about £30 billion. If the £5 billion of accumulated receipts were spent, that external debt would be increased.

In a characteristically powerful speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) considered this problem, as did some others.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Address the Chair.

Mr. Gow: I am entitled to address my hon. Friends, and I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, were able to hear what I was saying.

If the Government are committed — and we most emphatically are—to reducing public sector borrowing, we cannot ignore the fact that a significant part of public sector borrowing lies with local authorities. The journey to diminished debt and to abate the evil of inflation cannot be carried through to success painlessly.

Earlier Governments have made exactly the same diagnosis — that we have too much debt. They have recognised that inflation is the parent of unemployment and a major source of social envy, malice and injustice. The difference between the Opposition Front Bench and those who sit on the Treasury Bench is that, although we have made the same diagnosis and started on the same path towards a policy of sound money and honest finance, when the going got tough Opposition Members abandoned the policy.

Characteristically, I was rebuked by the Opposition Front Bench because I quoted an excellent letter written on 15 December 1976 by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer to Dr. Johannes Witteveen. The right hon.

[Mr. Gow]

Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was not alone in wanting to embark on the policy that we are now following. As I have been reminded of the compassion that Opposition Members claim is exclusive to them, I should like to remind them, although they will not like it, of what the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). said——

Mr. Rooker: Put your finger down.

Mr. Gow: No, I shall not put my finger down. It needs to be wagged at the Opposition; besides which, it is my finger.

Addressing his comrades at the Labour party conference of 1976, the former Prime Minister said:

"We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by boosting Government spending."

That is what the Opposition are asking us to do now. The right hon. Gentleman continued:

"I tell you in all candour"——

[*Interruption.*] I should have thought that the Opposition would show a little more respect for the man who used to lead them. I am showing the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth respect. However much Opposition Members shout, I shall get this quotation out because it is important that we be reminded of truths. Some truths continue to be valid although they were uttered nine years ago.

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists and, in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step."

Opposition Members who argue, sometimes with the highest motives, that it would be right on grounds of compassion to increase public expenditure now would bring about the higher inflation and higher unemployment of which their former leader warned.

We know that genuine hardship still exists, but it will be relieved only if we lay a firm foundation for more jobs. I therefore ask the House to reject the motion and approve the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 314.

Division No. 134] **[7 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penisto*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gr
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marshall, David *(Shett*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilb*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon Ja
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W's*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Abe*
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordor
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr Davi
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leec*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hack*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonde*
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Lady*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hamp*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Be*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John D
Thomas, Dafydd *(Meri*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gow*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.

Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter. *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments).*

The House divided: Ayes 307, Noes 204.

Division No. 135] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William

Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robin Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes the existence of local authority accumulated reserves of capital receipts of about £5 billion and the Secretary of State for the Environment's acceptance that these reserves belong to the local authorities; further notes that housing and infrastructure needs are reflected in the gross provision of over £4 billion for local authority capital spending in 1985-86; and welcomes the Government's determination to keep next year's local authority capital expenditure within the total provided in the Autumn Statement and approved by this House on 6th December 1984.

7.22 pm

Mr. Rooker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As 74 right hon. and hon. Members have signed a motion which is virtually identical to that which has just been defeated, is it consistent with being an hon. Member of the House that only the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) has voted for what he signed?

Mr. Speaker: I am in no way responsible for what hon. Members sign or for what they do in the Division Lobbies.

Representation of the People Bill

As amended, considered.

New Clause 6

VOTING AT SPECIAL POLLING STATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

'(1) Schedule *[Special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* to this Act makes provision for those—

(a) whose circumstances on the date of the poll at a particular parliamentary election in Northern Ireland will be or are likely to be such that they cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person as electors at the polling stations allotted or likely to be allotted to them under the parliamentary elections rules, but

(b) who on that date will be in Northern Ireland.

(2) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument bring that Schedule into force if he is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to prevent serious abuse of the system of voting by post in the case of ballot papers for elections in Northern Ireland sent to addresses there in pursuance of applications granted under section 7(1) of this Act.

(3) That Schedule shall cease to be in force if the Secretary of State so provides by order made by statutory instrument (without prejudice to his power to make a further order under subsection (2) above), and an order under this subsection may include such transitional provisions as the Secretary of State considers necessary or expedient.

(4) No order under this section shall be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by each House of Parliament.

(5) While that Schedule is in force, section 7(5) of this Act shall have effect as if it required a person applying under section 7(1) of this Act to vote by post at a particular parliamentary election in Northern Ireland to provide an address in Great Britain as the address to which his ballot paper is to be sent.'—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment (a), in subsection (2) after 'instrument', insert

'not later than three years after the commencement of this Act.'.

Government amendments Nos. 16 to 44, 54 to 59, 61 to 63 and 66 to 71.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I raise with you a matter that has not been covered in the selection that is being debated tonight? I refer particularly to a debate on an amendment on the multiple registrations of electors that was withdrawn in Committee on the basis that we should return to it on Report. That point has been covered by a number of new clauses, notably new clause 1 which stands in the name of the Opposition. That matter has caused concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. There was a defect in the amendment that was tabled in Committee and that was why we sought to withdraw it and to return to it on Report. Now that we do not have that opportunity we are in difficulty.

Mr. Speaker: The mere fact that a new clause has been withdrawn in Committee on the Floor of the House does not entitle it automatically to be selected on Report. Indeed, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the general principle is that if there has been a debate on an identical new clause, it is highly unlikely to be selected again.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the course of consideration of the new clause and amendments that we are about to discuss I hope that you will consider the point raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). No one assumed that that subject would automatically be selected for debate, but there was a general feeling that an opportunity should be given for the issue to be brought back, particularly as there was agreement on both sides of the House that the Government should look again at the matter. The unusual feature of the debate was that there were representations from the Opposition Front Bench, from this Bench, from the hon. Member for Caernarfon and from Government Back Benchers because of dissatisfaction that the Government had failed to move on that point. The desire to return to it on Report was far more widely shared than on any other issue that has come up under the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I have considered the matter carefully. A virtually identical amendment was debated for about an hour in Committee. The Government gave no guarantees, and I do not think that I can change the selection.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I make two submissions in relation to this group? I have no doubt that you would accept that amendment (a), standing in the name of my hon. Friends and myself, raises a major matter of principle and that in due course we would wish that to be put to the House separately so that we, and possibly other hon. Members, can go on record in support of it.

The second submission is by way of a complaint that amendments have been grouped together which by no stretch of the imagination relate to the same subject. May I give as examples amendments Nos. 18, 21 and 25? Some of them may be drafting amendments, but on the most generous construction they cannot be regarded as hanging together with the subject matter of new clause 6. I make this submission because it is obviously in the interests of the House that vigilance should be exercised in ensuring that amendments relating to different matters are not grouped together so as to deprive the House of the opportunity of considering them separately.

Mr. Speaker: I give the right hon. Member a guarantee that there will be a separate Division on amendment (a) if he so wishes.

The right hon. Member knows that on the grouping of the Government amendments I am guided by the Government. As he has raised the matter, I shall look at it again to see whether there is any way in which I can possibly help him.

Mr. Mellor: Whether special rules should apply to Northern Ireland has been a matter of intense discussion during the course of deliberations on the Bill. In Committee it was determined that changes would be made that left the provisions on the face of the Bill common to Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. But it was made clear that it was the Government's wish to make proposals that allowed a change to be made if evidence arose subsequently that gave rise to the suspicion that malpractice on a large scale was likely, which was the reason for the difference in the first place.

7.30 pm

All the matters contained in that grouping go to the issue of those arrangements and the bringing in of new

machinery. The amendment by which, very properly, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) sets great store lays down a time limit on that. I believe that it would be wholly artificial to consider a time limit on proposals separately from the proposals themselves. In previous discussions, the proposals have always been regarded as a package because they replace matters which previously we agreed to remove from the face of the Bill.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not often that the Minister fails to take a point. It is probably my fault if he has failed to do so in this case.

I was not complaining that amendment *(a)* should be debated in the context of new clause 6. I do not think that it could otherwise have been debated properly. I am inviting the Minister to give his attention to the fact that a number of amendments, not all of a drafting character, which are grouped together in the block comprising amendments Nos. 16 to 24 will be found on examination not to be consequential upon or coherent with the major proposal enshrined in the new clause and our proposed amendment to it.

In view of what you said, Mr. Speaker, I hope that it will be sufficient and avoid taking up more of the time of the House if the Minister ensures that the greatest severity is used in future in distinguishing amendments which go to different subjects.

Mr. Mellor: I take the right hon. Gentleman's point. In our consideration, what weighed heavily with us was that these arrangements emerged as a result of a growing consensus, and it had not been anticipated that any difficulties would be encountered. Perhaps we took a more generous view of the grouping than might otherwise have been the case.

If the right hon. Gentleman will accept this grouping on this occasion, I shall have regard to what he has said on future occasions.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has to do with the Report stages of Bills in general.

I have noticed in recent years—and it goes back before your time—that amendments selected for Report seem to cover large areas that have already been discussed fully in Committee. Going back several years, it used to be the accepted rule that if an amendment had been reasonably discussed in Committee, it was not allowed to be rediscussed—except very exceptionally—on Report.

It is the change in this form of selection so that we are now getting debates in Committee repeated on Report that is increasing the number of amendments selected and, therefore, the time that the House is given to discuss Bills on Report.

We are not discussing new matters. We are regurgitating what has been discussed already. I should appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, if you would look at that in future. It is a matter for you, and I am only suggesting a point of view that I have and that other hon. Members may have. We are extending Report stages too widely.

Mr. Beith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that in considering that matter you will not only assess carefully whether the description given is a true one of the trend over the years—I suggest that it is not—but that you will also bear in mind, especially in respect of Bills which are not considered in Committee on the Floor of the House, that the position must be safeguarded of hon. Members who have matters to raise which they were not able to raise because they were not members of the Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) is very experienced in these matters and should have no criticism tonight that amendments have been too generously selected by me. That is just the point made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), because in his view I have not been generous enough. Hon. Members will see from my provisional selection that all the amendments except three, and amendment (a), are Government amendments.

Mr. Mellor: This large group of amendments makes a number of inter-related changes to the absent voting provisions. It follows clear indications of the Government's view that I sought to give in Committee when, as hon. Gentlemen representing Ulster constituencies know, the Government made many major concessions about any differences in the exercise of absent voting between Ulster and the rest of the United Kingdom. The Government went even to the point of restricting the entitlements of voters in Great Britain to have postal ballot papers sent out of the jurisdiction in order that common rules could apply. Such an entitlement would have been impossible in Northern Ireland because of the special position of ballot papers sent to the Republic of Ireland.

Effectively, we are able to say now that the absent voting arrangements for Northern Ireland are the same as those for Great Britain. That represents a major change from the Bill as it was introduced. I welcome it, Mr. Walker, because that was agreed to in the spirit of sensible discussion and compromise which rightly informs all our deliberations. It should inform a measure that changes the basic rules of elections which should, if possible, be the subject of the very minimum of partisan argument.

As I sought to make clear in Committee, there is a genuine fear on the part of my colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office that electoral malpractice might arise on such a scale that the House could with hindsight have been considered imprudent to have made the changes in Committee that it did and that it would be appropriate to have a fallback position which could be introduced speedily, subject to proper consultations and the will of the House, in order that the threat of malpractice on a large scale might be acted upon readily.

It is that which underpins most of the changes of substance contained in this group of amendments, and I shall go through them in the hope that, having set the overall framework and reminded the House of the exchanges which led up to them, I can throw some light on the details. Mr. Walker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would refer to me by my official title. We are not in Committee now. We are on Report.

Mr. Mellor: I had become aware of that as you rose, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): It is better than "Mr. President."

Mr. Mellor: It is better. I can think of all kinds of titles that would be inappropriate. However, if that is the worst mistake that I make this evening, I shall be well pleased with myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I deal first with postal ballot papers outside the United Kingdom, which are the subject of amendments Nos. 18, 20, 28 and 44. These amendments prevent postal voters, including postal proxies, from having their ballot papers sent outside the United Kingdom. In Committee, several right hon. and hon. Members voiced their concern about the provisions of the Bill which would have allowed postal ballot papers from Great Britain to be sent to addresses outside the United Kingdom. I undertook to raise the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and that I have done. It remains our view that all absent voters, whether inside or outside the United Kingdom, should have the choice of postal or proxy voting. But we bow to the general view of the Committee, and under these amendments an elector may vote by post only if the address to which he applies for the ballot paper to be sent is within the United Kingdom. Overseas electors and other absent voters who are outside the United Kingdom during the election period have to vote by proxy. I know that that change will be widely welcomed by members of all parties.

I turn to what has become the important issue of uniformity within the United Kingdom. This is covered by amendments Nos. 16, 19, 21 to 26, 29 to 43 and 67 to 71. Most of these amendments have a somewhat technical appearance, but their main purpose is to give Northern Ireland electors the same right to apply to vote by post or proxy at a particular election as electors in Great Britain, if they cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at their allotted polling station.

As I said in Committee, this change is subject to a reserve power, to which I shall turn in a moment. I suspect that it will be the most fully considered aspect of the amendments during the debate. We have also taken the opportunity to make some further improvements to the original Bill, which I hope to weave into the main thread to persuade the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that the decision to group the amendments together was not as unfortunate as he initially thought it to be.

I shall now deal with postal proxies. We made some changes to the right of a proxy to vote by post. The Bill as introduced allowed proxies to vote by post for an indefinite period only if they were themselves entitled to an absent vote for an indefinite period, for example on the grounds of physical incapacity. In Great Britain, proxies could apply to vote by post at a particular election if they could not reasonably be expected to vote at their elector's allotted polling station, and in Northern Ireland if their address was in a different district ward from their elector's qualifying address. The amendments allow proxies throughout the United Kingdom to apply for a postal vote if they cannot reasonably be expected to vote at the polling station. That is the fulfilment of a commitment to the right hon. Gentleman. He asked for something less, but we have managed to find arrangements to make the rules the same in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom.

In addition, the amendments restore the right, which proxies have under existing law, to vote by post for an indefinite period if they live in an area different from the elector's qualifying address. Service voters and others sometimes have difficulty in appointing a proxy in their own constituency, and it is all the more important not to create unnecessary difficulties for proxies if service voters and overseas electors are not to vote from abroad by post. "The same area" has, in this context, the same meaning as it has at present, with the exception that in Greater London and the metropolitan counties parliamentary constituencies are to be used as the basis for determining whether the proxy's address is in the same area as the elector's address. That is because electoral divisions will cease to exist in Greater London and the metropolitan counties if the Local Government Bill is passed. In the metropolitan counties, parliamentary constituencies are bigger than electoral divisions, and in Greater London they are the same size.

I now turn to a further refinement. Some of the amendments clarify the right of an absent voter, including a proxy, who is on the permanent list to have a ballot paper sent to a different address for a particular election only. It may happen that a person who is entitled to be sent a postal ballot paper for an indefinite period is away from home at a particular election—for example, he may be on holiday. The amendments make it clear that he may apply for a ballot paper to be sent to a different address, or to vote by proxy at a particular election without prejudice to his right to be sent a ballot paper to his usual address at subsequent elections.

That may sound a small point, but it is part of our commitment in the Bill, not only to address the larger issues but to make improvements and refinements of detail, which will bring clarity and sense to some of the smaller areas of our electoral law. Amendments Nos. 17 and 27 are purely minor drafting amendments.

I now turn to the central matters of the debate, and first to applications in person. Amendment No. 66 is the first of the reserve powers, which I mentioned at the outset. The representation of the people regulations must be drawn up after the Bill has been passed to allow some of the measures on the statute to be given a proper light. The regulations will flesh out those provisions and make them workable.

7.45 pm

The amendment allows the representation of the people regulations to include provisions requiring electors, who apply to vote by post or proxy at a particular election because they cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at their allotted polling station, to apply in person with proof of identification. I gave notice in Committee of the Government's intention to move this amendment. Effectively, it is a quid pro quo for the major concessions that the Government made by removing from the Bill the absent voting restrictions on Northern Ireland. In the first instance, we do not propose to exercise the power in any part of the United Kingdom. The power is exercisable in many parts of the United Kingdom and is not a specific arrangement for Northern Ireland. That makes it marginally more palatable to right hon. and hon. Members from Ulster.

However, it has been suggested that clause 7 would make it easy for a person who was intent on fraud to submit an absent voting application in an elector's name and, in effect, to steal the elector's vote by having the ballot paper sent to a distant address where it could not be traced. The amendment confers a reserve power to require applications

to be made in person with proof of identity, should vote stealing in clause 7 become a serious problem in any part of the United Kingdom.

New clause 6, amendments Nos. 54 to 59, 61, 62 and the new schedule, which is amendment No. 63, give the Secretary of State—in practice it will be the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but as in all statutes "Secretary of State" is undefined—the power to make an order entitling Northern Ireland electors who would otherwise vote by post under clause 7 to vote in person in special polling stations throughout Northern Ireland, if they are in Northern Ireland on polling day. Unlike the earlier amendment, this applies specifically to Northern Ireland. The power may be exercised only if the Secretary of State is satisfied that it is necessary to exercise it to prevent serious abuse of postal voting. The rules for the conduct of the poll at the special polling stations are set out in the new schedule. So long as the schedule is in operation, Northern Ireland electors may not apply to have a postal ballot paper sent to an address in Northern Ireland at a particular election. The right hon. Member for South Down has put down an amendment under which the power to introduce these amendments would lapse three years after the commencement—by which I assume he means the passage—of the Bill.

New clause 6 contains the power that enables the Secretary of State to bring the new arrangements into force. As I have indicated, the power may be exercised only by order subject to the affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament. It may also be exercised only if the Secretary of State is satisfied that it is necessary to do so to prevent serious abuse of postal voting in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State undertakes to consult the Northern Ireland parties before any order is laid before Parliament under this provision. Perhaps I could emphasise that it may be necessary to bring in the safeguards on the basis of an assessment of the likelihood of substantial abuse without waiting for a bad experience at an election. Subsection (3) enables the Secretary of State to make a further order restoring the full rights to vote by post given by clause 7 and, indeed, to make a subsequent order or orders to bring the schedule back into operation. However, it is not envisaged that these powers would be exercised at frequent intervals. Obviously, I hope that it will not be necessary to exercise them.

The order-making power does not affect the rights of those who apply to vote by post or proxy for an indefinite period under clause 6, for example on grounds of physical incapacity or the general nature of their occupation, service or employment. Nor—I stress this—does it affect the right of an elector to apply to vote by proxy at a particular election under clause 7, or to vote by post, if the address provided is an address in Great Britain. The only absent voters potentially affected by the implementation of the arrangements are those who have been brought into the absent voting arrangement by the new provisions. They are those who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at their allotted polling stations, and who would otherwise apply to have a postal ballot paper sent to an address in Northern Ireland. The Government are thinking mainly of those who have moved house since the qualifying date or who are on holiday in another Northern Ireland constituency. Instead of voting by post, the schedule enables them to vote in person at a special polling station in the constituency where they will be on polling day.

The arrangements for the designation of special polling places, the conduct of the poll at special polling stations and the proceedings at the close of poll are set out in the new schedule. We have resisted the perhaps tempting possibility of leaving the detailed arrangements to regulations. Although the schedule is long, complex and technical, much of the content is familiar because the draftsman has applied, with modifications, the provisions for the conduct of the poll in the parliamentary elections rules in schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983—the so-called "Ballot Act rules" which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) sought to raise in a different context at an earlier stage. I hope that that, at least, commends itself to the right hon. Member for South Down in that we have not taken what might on the face of it seem the easier course of waiting for regulations, but have sought to put these matters on the face of the Bill, albeit in a schedule.

The new arrangements, if introduced, would be facilitated by the particular way in which elections are organised in Northern Ireland. In Great Britain, the conduct of parliamentary elections is the responsibility of an officer appointed by a local authority which is wholly or partly contained in the parliamentary constituency. In Northern Ireland, as hon. Members from there know all too well, responsibility for the conduct of elections in each constituency, and indeed for the registration of electors throughout the Province, is in the hands of a chief electoral officer appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He would arrange for each special polling staion to be supplied with ballot papers from other constituencies in Northern Ireland and for the ballot papers to be sorted and sent on to be counted under his supervision at the close of poll. That is essentially what the schedule requires him to do.

If a Northern Ireland elector cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at his allotted polling station, paragraph 1 of the schedule gives him the right to apply to the chief electoral officer to vote in person at a special polling station. The provision of special polling stations and the designation of the special polling places in which they are situated is a matter for the chief electoral officer, as is the designation of polling places under the present law. Public notice is given of the special polling places designated under subparagraph (5). The number of polling stations provided will depend on the number of electors who apply under the new arrangements.

Instead of providing an address in Northern Ireland to which a postal ballot paper is to be sent, the applicant provides the address at which he will himself be on polling day. If the application is successful, the chief electoral officer sends the elector a notice telling him where he can vote in person at a special polling station. The elector than votes at the special polling station in the usual way, producing the identification required by the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985.

Most of the schedule from paragraph 2 onwards is needed to ensure that the proceedings at the special polling station are similar to the proceedings which apply at ordinary polling stations under the elections rules. An important difference is that instead of the polling agents appointed by the candidates to detect personation the chief electoral officer has power under paragraph 5 to appoint what we have called "observers" who under paragraph 10 have all the powers and duties of polling agents, so in fact they are more than mere observers. It would plainly be

[Mr. Mellor]

impractical to allow each candidate in each constituency at a parliamentary general election in Northern Ireland to appoint polling agents to attend at each polling station. The schedule allows the chief electoral officer, after consultation with the political parties, to appoint a reasonable number of observers for each special polling station.

At the close of poll the ballot boxes are sealed up and the other documents put in separate packets in the usual way. They are then taken to the chief electoral officer, who in the presence of the candidates sorts the ballot papers and other documents into separate packets for each constituency, verifying the ballot paper account before he does so to make sure that no ballot papers have gone astray. That is in paragraph 6 of the schedule. The ballot papers are then sent on to the places where the votes are being counted for each constituency. The returning officer conducts a further verification of the ballot papers that he receives from the chief electoral officer to make sure that all is still in order. The ballot papers from the special polling stations are then mixed with the postal ballot papers and the ballot papers from polling stations in the constituency. From that point on, the election proceeds in its usual way.

I have gone through the provisions with some care but without, I hope, taking excessive time. As I have said —it bears repeating—it is greatly to be hoped that those powers never have to be used. The purpose of the arrangements is to put the procedures for absent voting in Northern Ireland on the same footing as in Great Britain and this is a fallback position in the event of a threat of serious electoral malpractice emerging.

In conclusion, I hope that the House will feel that in the amendment we have responded genuinely and fullheartedly to the debate in Committee and have done our best to meet the points raised by Members in all parts of the House on Second Reading and subsequently. I shall, of course, listen with great care to what the right hon. Member for South Down says about his amendment. For our part, the Government see no reason why the power to introduce the new schedule should lapse after three years. The new clause makes it clear that the power can be exercised only in specific circumstances, which I have carefully tried to set out, and the Secretary of State would clearly have to account to the House through the procedures laid down as to why he was satisfied that the power should be exercised. Indeed, he has undertaken to go into the matter with the parties beforehand so that the arguments can be considered before it reaches the Floor of the House. As for the detailed provisions, the schedule is before the House and now is the time to debate it. I do not wish to anticipate what the right hon. Member for South Down has to say.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: My hon. Friends and I are not at all disposed to take back any expressions of satisfaction that have fallen from us during earlier proceedings on the Bill at seeing Northern Ireland and its citizens placed on the same footing as their fellow citizens in the rest of the kingdom. We acknowledge that the Home Office and Ministers in charge of the Bill have been open-minded in that respect, but it is only fair to acknowledge the support that we have had from the Opposition from the very first publication of any suggestion of differentiation. My only cavil at the Minister's words of introduction concerns his use of the word "concessions". We do not regard it as a concession that the people of Northern Ireland should be treated on the same basis as those of the rest of the United Kingdom, and we regard it as an outrage to be defended against and avoided if any proposal for differentiation is suggested or included in legislation, as would be the situation under the Bill without the new clause and schedule.

This day will be remembered in the annals of constitutional history and future students will find in their textbooks reference to this day's business and to this debate, because a most important constitutional innovation is being made by the new clause and the schedule. My hon. Friends and I strenuously object to it and hope that we shall receive widespread support from the House because what is proposed is essentially a derogation of the rights and powers of this House.

The new clause represents a power of suspension—a power to suspend what is in an Act of Parliament by means of an Order in Council. It enables a Minister, by making an order and passing it through the House, to suspend the operation of part of an Act of Parliament. That is a most remarkable innovation and one which will attract the attention not just of the present Government in subsequent years but of their successors. It is a Government benefit clause, enabling a Government to write into a Bill a clause which provides, in effect, that if they turn out to have made a mistake and the legislation is not working they can make an order and alter what Parliament has passed.

Mr. Kaufman: Would the right hon. Gentleman regard that as research on a legislative embryo?

Mr. Powell: The right hon. Gentleman tempts me into a contemporary subject of debate. It certainly means that the legislation is declared to be tentative and I question the right of any Government presenting legislation to the House to treat it in that way and to ask that certain provisions be specifically subject to suspension at the will of an Administration acting by Order in Council.

8 pm

This House has always been jealous of the suspensory power. We have always maintained that matters which are regulated by legislation must be dealt with by legislation if those provisions are to be changed. If this Order in Council is made, rights and opportunities of voting which have been conferred by an Act of Parliament will be withdrawn by subordinate legislation. That is a constitutional innovation which should be marked by the House, and it should be resented—and not only by hon. Members on one side—because it runs counter to the powers and traditions of the House in legislation and evokes echoes of the suspensory power which the Crown sought to exercise centuries ago, only to learn better when it made the attempt.

We are told that the purpose of this suspensory power will be to avoid an apprehended serious abuse of the system of voting. I shall explain to the Minister exactly why that motive is irrational in this context, and in doing so I am not blaming him or the Home Office for having cooked up this suggestion. I do not believe that a Department with the experience and outlook of the Home Office would want to write this sort of stuff into its legislation.

The Minister was candid and said that it was part of a deal with the Northern Ireland Office. My hon. Friends

and I do not believe that any deal is required in respect of Northern Ireland for what, in any case, is its right as part of the United Kingdom. That is not a privilege for which we should be called on to pay in the form of constitutional innovations, even if what is proposed is—I shall argue that it is not—well conceived for the purpose aimed at and practicable in its execution.

The notion is, and must be, that if postal ballot papers are sent to addresses in Northern Ireland outside the constituency to which they relate, the Provisional IRA, I assume—or perhaps the INLA—will organise a system of dispatch riders who will travel through the length and breadth of Northern Ireland calling at all the addresses on the postal voting list and counting up the ballot papers.

I assure the Minister — if it would accept my assurance, I would assure the Northern Ireland Office—that this is a chimera. The notion of any such process taking place is an absurdity. If the Government are looking for circumstances—it is not our object to bring them to their attention—in which postal votes could be abused, let them look through the cases, which they do not propose to suspend, where ballot papers are sent inside the constituency and where, therefore, those who aim at electoral malpractice will have the matter, so to speak, under their control and in their towns and villages, wherever they live and wherever they may be able to carry out their malpractices.

The picture, the cartoon, which is presumed by the provisions of the schedule is wholly unreal and irrational and it leaves undisturbed the only marginal circumstances in which it is conceivable that postal voting could be used for the purposes of electoral malpractices. But it is worse than that. The practicability of the whole show is open to serious doubt.

I believe that there was a stage in the gestation of these proposals when the idea was that in each constituency there would be one special polling station. I can understand that that was laughed out of court. I have a constituency of 600 square miles with two big mountain ranges in the middle. The notion that any one special polling station could, within screaming distance, serve the purposes of a person who was temporarily staying in any part of my constituency—unless he happened to be on the top of Slieve Croob—is unrealistic.

Thus, the schedule leaves the number of special polling stations undetermined. The Minister was candid enough to say who will determine it. It will not be determined by orders which, even in the negative form, could be brought before the House. It will be determined by the very person who has a vested interest in minimising the trouble to which the arrangements put him — namely, the chief electoral officer. I make no criticism of any individual, but in the nature of the matter his interests are not the same as those of the electors. Yet he will decide whether in my constituency of South Down there shall be three, six or 12 special polling stations.

I do not know which of those alternatives the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Under-Secretary, would be inclined to accept. I mention his constituency because it must be difficult for him — having a constituency similar to my former constituency, across which he can walk in perhaps 25 minutes in any direction —to conceive a constituency of 600 square miles with enormous geographical features interrupting communication.

Even in present circumstances — with, in my constituency, 80 polling stations — we receive well-founded complaints in some parts of my constituency about the distance that people have to travel to get to the nearest polling station which is allotted to them. That a fraction of that number of polling stations could be anything but a crying injustice to the electors, and treated by them as an insult, is clear. As an insult they will treat it. They will say, "You have allowed me to vote in person. Thank you very much. But I am staying in such-and-such a place and you have told me that I am to vote 20 miles away. What sort of an opportunity to vote is that intended to be?" In many cases we are dealing not with 20 miles down a motorway but with 20 miles of rough country and cross-country travel, often by people who do not themselves possess the means of transport.

I ask the Minister, who has been open-minded about this, to accept — I am putting it on the record in the hope that the House will support our protest—that this notion of special polling stations, unless there are to be almost as many special polling stations as there are allotted polling stations, is not a starter and will cause vast irritation, disappointment and annoyance, and will be regarded as a mockery.

I want the Minister to envisage what will be the situation in these special polling stations. There is the presiding officer. He is in a different situation from a presiding officer in an allotted polling station. He has anything up to 16 sets of ballot papers; I hope that he will succeed in ringing the changes on them accurately. I say anything up to 16, but the Minister may say that there will be a computerised system which will ensure that he will be sent only the ballot papers for those particular constituencies from which electors are resident in that constituency where the polling station—*[Interruption.]*

I notice that on the Government Benches there is now taking place a conference between the Minister and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) which possibly calls for a suspension, if not of the sitting, at any rate of the flow of my argument, as I am anxious to bring the considerations that I am putting forward to the attention of the Minister. I shall continue, therefore, when he has fixed up for the hon. Member for Antrim, North to find his place in the debate.

I want the Minister to envisage the situation of the presiding officer. He has certain duties under the law before he holds out a ballot paper. In an ordinary polling station, his duty would be to satisfy himself that the person to whom he hands the ballot paper is the person who appears in the register of electors.

We had the misfortune earlier to pass a piece of legislation, which will be much regretted, which enforces in Northern Ireland a procedure of self-identification which will take place in those circumstances. The new schedule states in part III, paragraph 11:

"References to the register of parliamentary electors for an election shall be read as references to the special polling list for that election."

"Ah, you have spotted it," says the Minister, "All that the presiding officer has to do is to thumb his way through the sheets which he has received from the chief electoral officer and say, 'Who are you, my man?' The elector will say, 'I have a permit to vote. I am on the list of those allowed to vote at a special polling station. My electoral number is 2056'." He will do that in accordance with paragraph 4 of the schedule, if I am not mistaken.

[Mr. Powell]

The Minister is purporting to enact something which will meet the danger of electoral abuse. I want him to consider the difference between that action in a special polling station and what takes place in an ordinary polling station. In an ordinary polling station, the elector presents himself, the presiding officer flicks through the register and there is the entry to which the person asking for the ballot paper purports to correspond.

In doing that, the presiding officer places himself in a strong position to form a view on whether personation is taking place. He and the polling agents in that polling station know that part of the ward very well. The presiding officer has probably lived near there all his life. Therefore, the announcement that the elector lives at No. 28 Ballynamaghery road, Castlewellan, means something to everyone who is in that polling station. The same would not be the case in a special polling station in East Londonderry, for example, if an elector made the assertion, "I am No. 2045. You will find my name on that list and that is me."

If we are still jealous, as we were a few months ago, of preventing personation, let me tell the Minister that he is creating a new type of opportunity for personation unless he takes an alternative course. I have no doubt that the alternative was canvassed, only to be dismissed as impracticable. The alternative is that the presiding officer should have copies of the registers. Alas, my hon. Friends and I would have suggested that but for its total impracticability. The electoral registers for my constituency stand about 2 ft high. There would consequently be an Egyptian pyramid of registers which would be in a special polling station if we were to enable the presiding officer to have the chance, which other presiding officers have, of verifying on the register the identity of a person to whom he hands a ballot paper.

It is wrong for the Government to do in this way what they want to do. If at any time they wanted to withdraw the voting rights of people in Northern Ireland there is only one proper way to do it—by legislation, the way in which voting rights are being conferred in this Bill.

Even there we have sought, in the spirit which the Minister was describing, to meet the Government by saying to the Minister, "Your friends in the Northern Ireland Office are a bit hysterical about electoral malpractice. In that case we will allow this to be put to the test. We are so convinced about the advice which we are giving you that we are not afraid. Let this run to include the next general election. If you do not think that three years are adequate for that purpose, substitute another wording, but do not write permanently into the law of the country a suspensory power for withdrawing rights which have been conferred by legislation."

That is the first plea which we make to the House and to the Government. If the deal is so compelling upon the Government, let them make it an experimental option which can be tested against experience and practice. If we are wrong, we shall be proved to be wrong and the Government will then have firm ground under their feet for amending legislation, if that is necessary.

We also contend that the method proposed in the schedule is inherently impractical in the real circumstances of Northern Ireland. It will be regarded by the electors concerned not as the granting of a facility but as a withdrawal of a facility. It will be regarded as a means pretending to give a facility which they will not have practicable opportunity to exercise.

On top of all that, rather than remove the theoretical a abstract possibility—it is no more than that—that pos ballot papers sent outside a constituency could be used an organisation within that constituency for electo malpractice, it widens the opportunities available to vot for personation.

8.15 pm

The Minister has given a lot of time and thought to t Bill. He has shown himself alive to the situation as ho Members representing Northern Ireland seats ha described it to him. We ask him to take what has been sa this evening as meant not to interfere with the purpose th has been achieved of putting Northern Ireland in the sa position as the rest of the United Kingdom, but to take for what it is, an attempt to avoid the Governme unconstitutionally putting an absurdity upon the statu book.

There will be opportunity in the subsequent stages the Bill, if our arguments carry weight with t Government and with the House, for this suspenso power to be limited. The Minister may well say, "I ha gone to all this trouble to excogitate a suspensory pow in all this detail. I went into detail specially for your sak so that it should not be in orders. Now you want me scrap it." We are so modest that we are not even aski him to scrap it. We are asking him to treat it experimental, which it should be. That is the purpose amendment (a) which will be moved in due course behalf of my hon. Friends and myself.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): At an earlier stag when we were considering the position of Northern Irela under the Bill, the Minister gave great encouragement us all and showed that he was aware of the case made him by hon. Members on both sides of the House. At th time due credit and the necessary praise were given to hi but we also gave him warning that when he presented t appropriate amendment we would reserve the right to de with it as we saw it in relation to our constituents.

I am amazed to learn that responsibility for getting t amendment on to the Amendment Paper really rests wi the Northern Ireland Office. As a representative Northern Ireland, I must go beyond the Northern Irela Office. I deplore the action of the chief electoral offic of Northern Ireland, who seems to be in a position dictate to the Northern Ireland Office and now to t House. I do not think that any electoral officer, or the chi electoral officer, of Northern Ireland has any right, for h own convenience and desire, to do away with the bas elementary rights of the citizens of one part of the Unit Kingdom.

I must put on record the fact that I deprecate t representations made to the Northern Ireland Office by t chief electoral officer and the fact that the Northern Irela Office, instead of considering those representation weighing them properly in the balance, putting them und close scrutiny and consulting the elected representatives Northern Ireland about them, proceeded to do the deal th we have heard about. I in no way blame the Minister wh is presenting the Bill. I lay the blame on the Norther Ireland Office and on the chief electoral officer, who is t

parent of this unwanted embryo. This will bring much cause for alarm and actual alarm to the people of Northern Ireland.

It would appear that the House puts the citizens of Northern Ireland on a par with those in the rest of the United Kingdom. However, the Government propose that part of the Bill, when enacted, should be suspended, and suspended when the Minister thinks that it should be. When will the Minister think that it should be suspended? Whose advice will he take? Will he take the advice of the chief electoral officer? The person who sponsored the schedule will justify himself by saying to the Minister, "It is about time that the schedule was put into operation."

I recognise the force of amendment (a), and I think that it offers a solution. The Government will be able to say, "Let us put this matter to the test. Let us have an election in Northern Ireland that is conducted in the same way as elections in the rest of the United Kingdom. If we find that the fears of the chief electoral officer and the Northern Ireland Office are realised, we shall consider the matter." To do that without any experience would suggest that the Northern Ireland Office is being led by the nose by the chief electoral officer and that pressure has been put on the Minister so to amend the Bill.

The Minister should meet us on the sensible amendment that has been tabled to the new clause by saying that he is prepared to let us have the experience for which we have called. I can see far greater difficulties in Northern Ireland with people voting in their own areas than in the circumstances that have been the cause of the schedule.

It is proposed that we should have special polling stations. I do not know what our elections will be like. A special document will have to be presented before someone in Northern Ireland can be given a vote, and now we are to have special polling stations. As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said, there is enough trouble with polling stations in Northern Ireland in trying to satisfy the people and to prevent certain voters from having to enter areas which they think are unsafe. The way round the problem is for the Minister to accept amendment (a) and to say, "Let us have an election and see how it works out. If it works out all right at the next election, we shall not have to call into action the proposed schedule."

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I feel that I must reinforce what has already been said by Back-Bench Members in this debate. I feel that the House is treading on dangerous ground. It will certainly be doing so if we go down the road that is suggested without us protesting and issuing warnings that a mistake is being made and a bad precedent is being set.

When part of a Bill is drafted by the Northern Ireland Office, it usually has the unique feature of a self-destruct fuse. I think that that is a term used by spacemen; perhaps they were "spacers", as it were, who suggested the incorporation of this feature in the first place. The Northern Ireland Act 1982 contains a self-destruct fuse in the section that provides that, if it appears to Her Majesty that no proposals from the Northern Ireland Assembly will be forthcoming, she may take certain action. I wonder how many times Her Majesty has turned over in her bed uneasily when something is to happen under that legislation to which she can give her attention and she is left wondering whether she will be called upon to pull the lever and operate the self-destruct fuse.

I am concerned by the mention of a special polling list. I understand that the Minister intends that it should be to some extent a replacement for the register, but will it be recognised in legal terms as a substitute? What will be the position if the presiding officer in a polling station feels that he has to put the statutory question by reason of the lists of identity papers which have been produced? If the proposed provisions were in force, would he say, "Are you the person whose name appears on the special list as John Brown?", or would he say, in the terms of current legislation, "Are you the person whose name appears on the register as John Brown?" It seems that there will be a fundamental change in the law.

There is another curious feature which I assume has been considered by those who inspired the Bill. I do not blame the Minister for this, because it is my experience and that of my colleagues that he has far too much common sense ever to suggest that which appears in the proposals which are now before us. It appears that the ballot papers will have to be sorted into little packets to be dispatched to the appropriate place of count for each of the 17 constituencies. They can be sorted only if they are placed upwards in the presence of those representing the candidates, and it appears that they will be permitted to appoint representatives. Those who have attended counts know what nail-biting occasions they can be. They will be aware that it is required that ballot papers should be kept face down when they are being verified along with the totals. Under the provisions that are before us, they will be placed face upwards, as there will be no other way of defining, deciding and identifying which belongs to which constituent. The secrecy of the ballot will go for a burton at the beginning of the process.

We must remember that the object of the exercise is to deal with those who have a reputation for being unscrupulous. The parties that are represented in this place would never stoop to the practices of those with whom the Bill seeks to deal, but there are unscrupulous parties in Northern Ireland and one or two on this side of the water who are not represented in this place. It would not be beyond them to seek to identify the voter who was at a seaside resort on a particular occasion and who cast his vote for a certain candidate or party.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that the Home Ofice considers the arguments which I and others have advanced. I hope also that he will be persuaded by our arguments in this short debate. If we must try out that which is proposed, let it be done on an experimental basis. It should not become a permanent feature of this legislation. I think that it will be seen in due course as a nonsensical proposal by us all. I do not exclude you from that remark, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for we have all participated in the fighting of elections.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I do not believe that the constitutional right to exercise a franchise in any part of the United Kingdom should be capable of being varied by means of subordinate legislation at the behest of a Minister. I do not think that it is satisfactory that the Bill should be amended in the manner proposed by the Government, apparently as a result of the influence of a member of the Government who is not even present in the House this evening.

I understand the convention in these matters, and I recognise that this is a Home Office Bill, but the provisions before us relate specifically to the problems of

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

Northern Ireland, and it seems that they have been included at the behest of the Northern Ireland Office. It would therefore have been appropriate to invite a Minister from the Northern Ireland Office to be present to answer questions about the Government's thinking on this matter. The Under-Secretary has been discharged from any personal liability for the monstrosity that he is commending to the House. I am happy to discharge him from any culpability, but the Government as a whole should not be so discharged.

We cannot approve these measures without closely analysing the mischief which they are apparently designed to correct. The most compelling part of the speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was the deployment of the argument that the mischief which the measures appear to be designed to correct is probably a lesser mischief than the one that is likely to be caused by their implementation. That being so, the new clause seems like a last gasp from the Northern Ireland Office wishing to set its stamp on the Bill so that if matters do not go right at the next general election in Northern Ireland the Northern Ireland Office can say, "Well, we tried." That is an unsatisfactory way to proceed.

8.30 pm

I part company from the right hon. Member for South Down when he speaks about the difficulties faced by his constituents in a constituency of 600 square miles having to travel perhaps as much as 20 miles to a special polling station. In my constituency of 2,800 square miles, many of my constituents have normally to travel more than 20 miles to the polling station.

I strongly resent the suggestion that this proposal should be included in the Bill. I and my Liberal colleagues will not support the Government. We cannot accept that a bargain was struck by the House on this issue. I understand what the Minister said about the bargain that he has struck with his colleagues within the Government, but that is not a bargain to which we are party and, therefore, we cannot go along with it.

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not join in the general plaudits for the Minister, because I have done him enough damage in that way during the earlier course of the Bill. I share the opinions of all hon. Members who have spoken since the Minister moved the new clause. It is a great pity that, if the Government have their way, we shall enshrine in the legislation a legislative anomaly which flaws the other change in the Bill.

I have tried to work out what kind of legislation we shall get as a result of the Government's proposal. So far as I can see, we are pioneering in legislative form, because if we pass the changes that the Government want, against the will of those who have spoken, we shall be indulging in prospective, retrospective legislation. We shall be looking forward to going backward on something that the House of Commons has decided to do this evening.

I do not believe that that is sensible or good legislative practice or that it accords with the will of the House in wanting to achieve parity of absent voting arrangements for the whole of the United Kingdom. I say that because for several months now, as the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has been kind enough to point out, since the publication of the White Paper we have been trying to achieve parity of absent voting. Apart from that major flaw, we are extremely gratified by what we h achieved. The Government amendments, which in places remove the words "in Northern Ireland", important because they provide parity of absent vo arrangements.

I am pleased that the Government, having accepted arrangement, have achieved parity on the basis of limi absent votes cast by post to within the United Kingd I have had great misgivings—it is one of the m reasons why I opposed the expatriate vote—about idea of ballot papers being sent outside the islands of kingdom to other parts of the world—firstly, becaus the unreliability of such an arrangement but, much m because the secrecy of the ballot cannot best be prese if ballot papers are floating around all over the world li to be tampered with by people outside this country.

I am therefore pleased that the Government have, a listening to arguments, yielded to the proposal that made, with the agreement and support of others, absent voting by post should be confined to within United Kingdom while those who go outside the Un Kingdom exercise it more safely, more reliably and m secretly by proxy vote.

There is a good deal to welcome in this group amendments. That being so, it is a pity that there is I will not say fatal — damaging flaw in Government's fail-safe proposal. We do not like that we support the amendment spoken to by the right h Member for South Down.

Mr. Mellor: I am, of course, sad that the only ve that has been raised in support of this proposition sho have been mine. I am sensitive enough to the atmosph that we have created in this legislation to know that is an increasingly unique event and one which, all o things being equal, I should not have wanted to happ

A whole line of argument has not been fully deplo this evening, but it needs to be considered. It is that course, in any democracy, and in any part of the Un Kingdom, there could be potential electoral malpract We cannot blind ourselves to the reality that where th are difficulties and stresses within a community, prospe for electoral malpractice are that much greater. That been the unhappy lot of Northern Ireland, and it something which I, having no contact with the Provin regret as profoundly as those who bravely lead a public in the Province, when to lead a public life exposes th to far more risks than any of us on this side of the w can contemplate.

The House was minded to agree, only a few months —of course in the teeth of opposition; not from official Opposition, although I do not criticise them that, far from it—to introduce special arrangements relation to voting in person that reflected the difficul that many people believed arose because of the stres and strains within Northern Ireland.

Having introduced those special arrangements to m even more sure than we have customarily been able to that the person presenting himself to exercise his vot the person whose vote is being claimed, we should ridicule or underestimate the force of the argument tha would be unfortunate—to put it no higher—if consequence of the provision to extend absent voting v to allow people to circumvent the provisions wh Parliament had approved for voting in person. Therefo in the view of the Government, in the shape of my ri

hon. Friends at the Northern Ireland Office, in whose place I stand, this is not a matter that can be lightly discounted, although there is room for argument.

As a consequence of those arguments, a legitimate accommodation has been reached whereby the Government have been pleased to agree that the arrangements should apply throughout the United Kingdom. I do not say that in a spirit of concession, because it was meant, not as a concession to any part of the United Kingdom, but as a change from the Government's original view. We have not hesitated to change this area of our thinking, any more than we have hesitated to change others.

However much one might change one's approach to the position, one cannot put out of mind the residual fear that there are those who will exploit any opportunity for malpractice. The Government having taken the view which they did only a few months ago that voting in person and the regulations attaching to that needed to be tightened up, it might be said that the two are inconsistent and that the opportunity that was denied to malefactors a few months ago is being reopened to them now. That is why the Government believe firmly that it would be wrong not to take the opportunity to be able readily to change these arrangements in the event that cogent evidence is brought forward that malpractice is likely. No prudent Secretary of State would want to go forward with an election without availing himself of the opportunities presented by the amendment that I now propose.

I am sad that this should be seen as a constitutional monstrosity. It gives me no pleasure to hear it so denounced. However, I believe that it represents a proper basis on which the House can proceed. It demonstrates that we have listened and responded to the genuine feeling of a substantial minority in the House that we should endeavour not to be deflected from the course of common arrangements any more than is absolutely necessary, and that, although the evidence is not wholly conclusive of that now, that evidence may become available. It would be foolish not to have the opportunity readily to hand to make certain changes, provided that the House was satisfied that that should be done.

I have to say to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) with considerable regret that it is not open to me to state that we believe there can be any time limit on these powers. Who is to say what changes may occur between now and any point in the future in the increasingly difficult situation in Northern Ireland, mitigated by the fact that in one substantial respect the power to do this applies throughout the United Kingdom? As the right hon. Gentleman properly said during our earlier consideration of the Bill, I am not one to underestimate the potential for abuse anywhere in the United Kingdom. Electoral abuse is not a monopoly of any one part of the United Kingdom. In this instance I cannot assist the right hon. Gentleman as much as I have tried to assist in earlier stages of the Bill. Even if he cannot agree with me, I hope that he understands why that must be.

An accommodation has been reached which is perhaps unsatisfactory to both sides of the question. There are those who believe that there is no evidence of malpractice to justify these arrangements and that, even if there were, it would be wrong to introduce those arrangements because the system has to be able to stand as a whole. That I understand. Others take the view that we cannot protect the integrity of our democracy unless, to face exceptional circumstances, we are prepared to take exceptional measures.

I therefore commend the amendment to the House. With regret, I cannot commend acceptance of the right hon. Gentleman's amendment.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I have listened to the entire debate and to some of the previous discussions on the Bill. I think that the Minister's reply is a quite inadequate defence of an innovation that has been explained by other hon. Members who described exactly what the Government are doing constitutionally in their proposal. Even if the hon. Gentleman were defending the immediate proposition, the reply would be insufficient, but it is certainly insufficient if it is to be a defence of the major innovation involved. The hon. Gentleman has not sought to reply to that.

I fully accept that the Minister has done a great deal through discussion and negotiation to try to produce a Bill which commands general assent in the House. It is right that the Government should do so, especially with a Bill of this nature.

I make a final plea to the hon. Gentleman to look at the matter afresh. He does not have to slam the door now, particularly on the basis that he does so. He talks of an accommodation. If it is an accommodation, as has been indicated, it must be one between the Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office. If that is the accommodation, it is wrong that no representative of the Northern Ireland Office has attended the debate. In order for the House to have a real debate and chance of reaching a fresh accommodation—that is what Committee and Report stages are for—the Northern Ireland Office should have been present to hear the representations not only of Northern Ireland but of every other hon. Member who has spoken in the debate.

Mr. Mellor: I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Gentleman, but I must make clear that in my references to an accommodation I meant an accommodation between the various views put forward in Parliament on which the Government have only one view, that is, the view that I have put forward. It is in that spirit, considering what changes have been made, that I use the word accommodation.

Mr. Foot: I am eager to accept that explanation because, if that is the case, the Minister can easily make a further accommodation which unites the House. It is very easy for him to do this. From what he says, he has plenary powers, and I am glad to hear that. He does not have to worry a fig about the Northern Ireland Office—to hell with the Northern Ireland Office. That, I am sure, will unite considerable sections of the House. We are gratified to know that the hon. Gentleman has the plenary powers at his disposal. All he has to do now—and I say this seriously—is to recognise the present mood of the House on the subject. Now that Parliament has considered the matter carefully and had the first opportunity to debate the question, it is evident that not a single voice, not a single inflection of a voice, supports the Government's proposition for the good reason that the Government have no case.

[Mr. Foot]

The Minister was much more persuasive in his first speech than in his last one. In his first speech he defended the general arrangements that have been reached. In his last speech, he had to defend the Government from attack.

I plead with the hon. Gentleman, and we have a right to plead in consideration of the Bill, as I am sure he will acknowledge. If the Bill had been left in the form in which it was originally introduced by the Home Office, it would have caused ructions and opposition throughout the country. However, it has been altered and transformed in its passage through Parliament by my right hon. Friends and other hon. Members who have engaged in the negotiations and discussions. The Bill has been transformed into what all Representation of the People Bills should be, that is, Bills which can command general assent in the House. I plead with the hon. Gentleman not to slam the door now. Other opportunities remain in which the matter can be discussed and there are other places in which it can be altered.

Just as we have made huge improvements in other parts of the Bill, so should the Minister listen to what we are now saying. I hope that he will not insist that what he said is the final word, and that he will consider the amendment afresh. It would uphold the constitutional arrangement instead of damaging it, as has been clearly described.

Mr. Kaufman: With the leave of the House, I should like to add a further word. A possibility has occurred to me. While not dealing with the constitutional argument that has been put forward, to which I adhere and which I support, it might at any rate provide uniformity of the sort that we have seen in the discussions of the Bill. Therefore, I put to the Minister—I do not expect him to respond now—the possibility that in the House of Lords the Government might consider making the new clause a new schedule, so that the change would not single out Northern Ireland but be potentially applicable to the whole United Kingdom.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause accordingly read a Second time.

Amendment (a) proposed, in subsection (2), after 'instrument', insert

'not later than three years after the commencement of this Act.'.
—[Mr. Molyneaux.]

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes, 84, Noes 168.

Division No. 136] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
George, Bruce
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nicholson, J.
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr Dav
Paisley, Rev Ian
Park, George
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Robinson, P. *(Belfast*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle o*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. Martin Smyth.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwy
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Ep*
Harris, David
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardi*
Jones, Robert *(W Her*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michi
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gains*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon M
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Ber*
Maclean, David John
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Ar*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW H*
Morris, M. *(N'hampto*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harro*

Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*	Stradling Thomas, J.
Parris, Matthew	Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Pawsey, James	Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth	Terlezki, Stefan
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian	Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Pollock, Alexander	Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Portillo, Michael	Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Powley, John	Thornton, Malcolm
Proctor, K. Harvey	Thurnham, Peter
Raffan, Keith	Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Rathbone, Tim	Tracey, Richard
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon	Trotter, Neville
Ridsdale, Sir Julian	Twinn, Dr Ian
Roe, Mrs Marion	van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Rossi, Sir Hugh	Waddington, David
Rowe, Andrew	Waller, Gary
Sackville, Hon Thomas	Ward, John
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Sayeed, Jonathan	Watson, John
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*	Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*	Wheeler, John
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*	Whitney, Raymond
Silvester, Fred	Wiggin, Jerry
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*	Wilkinson, John
Soames, Hon Nicholas	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Speed, Keith	Winterton, Nicholas
Speller, Tony	Wolfson, Mark
Spencer, Derek	Yeo, Tim
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*	Younger, Rt Hon George
Stanbrook, Ivor	
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*	Mr. John Major and
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*	Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

LIMITATION ON CANVASSING

'No canvassing for an election may take place within twenty-five yards of any place designated as a polling place for the election.'.—*[Mr. Simon Hughes.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am grateful that the new clause has been selected and do not propose to press it to a Division, as it is a probing new clause concerning the practical experience of returning officers to whom I have spoken who are worried that there is a lack of definition in the law. I apologise for the new clause not being the jewel in the crown of the parliamentary draftsman.

During elections, many allegations and counter-allegations concerning the behaviour of candidates' helpers reach the returning officer, mainly because the law on canvassing is unclear. I shall give some examples of the questions that are asked. Should people be allowed into the school porch with stickers on or with posters in their hands or with polling cards with the names of the candidate? Should it be permissible to buttonhole people as they walk up the footpath to the polling station or to whisper in their ear the name of the preferred candidate as, at 9.58 pm, they sneak in to cast the last vote of the day?

Can the committee rooms of the other party be five yards opposite the entrance to the school where polling is taking place, plastered with posters influencing the voter who might not have made up his mind on the person for whom he should vote? What about that famous aberration, the sticker on the tree? Is it possible to have the name of the candidate plastered all over the trees, the railings or the corrugated iron? In my constituency, I am grateful that there are trees and corrugated iron because they are the only solace that they give to the opposition. They tend to have no posters in windows, but to cover the rest of the constituency. However, trees and corrugated iron do not have the vote yet.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Except in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) considers himself to be nearer to these aberrations on the Celtic fringe than I am. Certainly, in Southwark and Bermondsey, the trees and the corrugated iron do not vote.

What about the latest and most recent addition to this panoply of alternative canvassing—the sandwich people on the pavement, parading up and down? They give the name of the candidate or—in an election such as the by-election at which I was first elected to the House, in which there were 16 candidates—the number of the candidate, which might be easier to remember.

The problem is extended and expanded by the increase in technology. What about the loud hailer, the megaphone or the public address system coming down the street shouting, "Vote, vote, vote for Alan Beith, David Mellor, Kevin Barron or Simon Hughes"? Are they obliged, five yards before the entrance to the polling station, to go quiet, slide past and then incite people again? Can they aim their fire at the gate of the polling station so that as people go into vote they are battered with the name of the technologically best-equipped candidate? I hear grunts of approval from the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). Obviously, hard tactics are employed, which is why he ends up with a relatively large majority.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): If the new clause were to be accepted, would it be permissible for one, during the campaign or the three-week period, to call on those who live next door to the polling station? On the wording of the new clause, it would seem that we are to be excluded from the whole of the area, and some may welcome that. Let it not be said that the hon. Gentleman's drafting is as daft as his new clause.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) was about to get my approval for his intervention, but he lost it with his final sentence. As he will recollect, at the beginning I said that my new clause was intended as a general proposition relating to election day. As he suggested, schoolkeepers, having had to put up with all the inconvenience of election day, might be pleased to be spared by the canvassers who try to get around the Alsatian in the days before the election to cull the one or two votes that there may be in the schoolkeeper's house.

The issue is what should be the definition and the acceptability of canvassing. It is a practical problem that occupies much of the time of officers of local authorities—returning officers and their staff—each time that an election is held. I am not suggesting that, where it is proper and lawful, one should put off those who wish to canvass. It is not in the same category as that illegal practice that would be carried out by a priest, a vicar or a minister seeking to exert spiritual influence. Halsbury says:

"Ministers of religion may legitimately address their congregations upon the candidates' conflicting claims, but in this

[Mr. Hughes]

connection must not hold out hopes of reward for the hereafter, or threaten to excommunicate or to withhold the sacraments, or denounce the voting for any particular candidate as a sin."

I am not suggesting that the kind of practices about which we are speaking come into that larger than life category, but people are for ever being told, "Take off your badge; you can't go into the polling station wearing that sticker; stay outside if you are carrying those posters."

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend will remember that one of the difficulties faced by people at polling stations because of the unlimited discretion that is given to returning officers is that tellers are frequently made to stand out in the rain or on the other side of the street when they are carrying out the legitimate democratic practice of assembling a list of the number of people who have voted.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is right. If one looks at the statutes that govern elections, these are discretions that most electoral registration officers and returning officers would prefer not to have. They have to adjudicate, and the circumstances are infinitely variable. They have a very hard job to peform not only on polling day but afterwards in trying to convince people that they have made a fair decision.

When asked in opinion polls or on the street who they will vote for at elections, many people say that they will make up their mind when they get to the polling station. If that is the case, we have to ensure that people reach polling stations in a fit state to make up their minds once they arrive there. The last impression might not be so valuable as the first. The reason for the new clause and the request to the Minister to assist not only the House but all those who seek to make sure that we have free and fair elections is the need for a boundary, a guideline and a reference point.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that anybody who occupies a residence within 25 yards of a polling station will be unable to put a poster in his window?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for St. Helens, South made a similar point. If we defined "polling station" as opposed to "polling place" we should not prevent a schoolkeeper who lived within the curtilage of the school from doing so. If, however, the schoolkeeper or caretaker lives in the polling place there is sometimes a problem if they wish to display party political propaganda on election day. To my knowledge, schoolkeepers have been asked to take down posters that they have displayed because they look out over the playground and people see them last as they go into the school. That is a relevant issue.

The practice in Rother Valley and in Southwark may be different. The results may well be different, too. The hon. Gentleman no doubt wishes it were otherwise but that is not the case. I hope the Minister will either say that the law as it stands needs no amendment or that he will be willing with his right hon. and learned Friend to look at the present practice and reassure the most harassed people of all on election day, the returning officers, who very often face political difficulties in trying to interpret something that is not at the moment defined.

Mr. Mellor: I have listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman. We have tried to deal not with some of the larger points but with some of the details relating to electoral regulations in order to discover what improvements need to be made. We have made a thorough trawl through the detail, assisted by many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) who knows a great deal about these matters.

My difficulty about responding as fully as I would have wished to the new clause is that the Government have not had these matters drawn formally to our attention during the course of the consultation exercise and the many discussions that have taken place. I fully understand his examples relating to the exercise of discretion that is involved. I have not participated in any election where there have not been difficulties. However, I am not sure whether a rule of the kind that the hon. Gentleman proposes would result in clarity or would create anomalies of a different kind. One may be thrown back on the ERO's discretion as the only appropriate way of keeping order in view of the many problems that can arise.

9.15 pm

I would say only that if there are matters that the hon. Gentleman wants to set out more fully in writing, I and my officials will look at them, as we have tried to do genuinely with every point, however large or small, that has been brought to us in this measure. Up to now we have not had widespread reports that people think that a change is necessary in either the statute or the regulations, which it is worth bearing in mind will be drawn up later, so there is not such a short timescale. But I shall consider sympathetically any points that the hon. Gentleman or any of his hon. Friends wish to raise on this at a later date.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for that. As I said, I do not intend to do more than test the temperature today. I understand that at conferences of senior officers of authorities concern has been expressed about this issue, certainly by more than just the officers in the London borough of Southwark. It may not have featured as prominently as other matters that have been legislated upon or upon which legislation is proposed. I shall take up the Under-Secretary's offer and ask my chief officers, and those whom they know share the same concerns, to make formal representations to him and to his Department in the hope that where there has been confusion and chaos in the past practices may be made easier and any injustices may be remedied. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 11, at end insert 'and'

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 2 to 8 and 10 to 15.

Mr. Brittan: These are all consequential amendments which reflect the deletion in Committee of the second set of conditions, as they are called, in clauses 1 and 3. The second set of conditions comprises the conditions under which a person could qualify as an overseas elector if he

had left the United Kingdom before he reached voting age. As those have been deleted, it would be appropriate to delete the matters referred to in the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 1, line 13, leave out '(age apart)'.

No. 3, in page 1, line 14, leave out from 'citizen' to end of line 16.

No. 4, in page 2, line 6, leave out
'one of the following sets of'
and insert 'the following'.

No. 5, in page 2, line 7, leave out
'The first set of conditions is'
and insert 'Those conditions are'.—*[Mr. Brittan.]*

Clause 2

REGISTRATION OF BRITISH CITIZENS OVERSEAS

Amendments made: No. 6, in page 2, line 34, leave out 'or, as the case may be, at which he was resident'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 42, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 43.

No. 8, in page 3, line 5, leave out 'and'.—*[Mr. Brittan.]*

Mr. Brittan: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 3, line 9, at end insert
and,
(e) that the declarant has not formed the intention to reside permanently outside the United Kingdom'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall take amendment (a) to the proposed amendment, in line 2, leave out
'has not formed the intention'
and insert 'does not intend'.

Mr. Brittan: These amendments deal with a declaration required from an overseas elector about his intentions with regard to whether he will reside permanently outside the United Kingdom. The House will recall that that was one of the most anxious of matters that was discussed at an earlier stage. I accept that it is appropriate that a declaration of the right kind should be made by anybody who is seeking to vote if outside the United Kingdom. Two forms of declaration have been offered. One is that the declarant
"has not formed the intention"
to reside permanently outside the United Kingdom and the other is simply that he "does not intend" to reside permanently outside the United Kingdom. The latter has been proposed by the Opposition and I am content to accept it as a form of words preferable to that which I had originally proposed. Therefore, I invite the House to agree to amendment (a).

Mr. Barron: The House will appreciate that this is the third occasion on which I have tabled an Opposition amendment and the Minister has accepted it. I am only sorry that he did not see fit to do so when we discussed new clause 28 in Committee.

I am pleased that the Government have decided to accept amendment (a). I discussed it with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who, as everyone will know, is a parliamentary expert on grammar. He felt, as did my right hon. and hon. Friends, that the phrase
"has not formed the intention"
would be much better replaced by the phrase "does not intend". When reading the Bill, I am sure that many people outside the House will agree with that.

Amendment to the proposed amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 3, line 15, leave out from beginning to 'specify' in line 22 and insert
'specify the address in respect of which he was registered and may not'.

No. 11, in page 3, line 26, leave out
'or, as the case may be, at which he was resident'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 3

EXTENSION OF FRANCHISE FOR EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Amendments made: No. 12, in page 4, line 19, leave out '(age apart)'.

No. 13, in line 21, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 22.

No. 14, in line 30, leave out
'one of the following sets of'
and insert 'the following'.

No. 15, in line 31, leave out
'The first set of conditions is'
and insert 'Those conditions are'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 6

ABSENT VOTE AT ELECTIONS FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 8, line 42, after 'them', insert 'in their applications'.

No. 17, in page 9, line 14, leave out 'included' and insert 'shown'.

No. 18, in page 9, line 20, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 7

ABSENT VOTE AT A PARTICULAR ELECTION AND ABSENT VOTERS LIST

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 9, line 25, leave out
'election in Great Britain or at a particular'
and insert 'or'.

No. 20, in page 9, line 26, after 'application' insert '(subject to subsection (5) below)'.

No. 21, in page 9, line 36, leave out from beginning to end of line 26 on page 10 and insert—

'(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply to a person who is included in the record kept under section 6 of this Act in respect of elections of the kind in question, but such a person may, in respect of a particular parliamentary or local government election, apply to the registration officer—

(a) for his ballot paper to be sent to a different address in the United Kingdom or,

(b) to vote by proxy,

if he is shown in the record so kept as voting by post at elections of the kind in question.

(3) The registration officer shall grant an application under subsection (2) above if it meets the prescribed requirements.'

No. 22, in page 10, line 30, after 'of' insert '(i)'.

No. 23, in page 10, line 30, leave out 'this section' and insert 'subsection (1) above'.

No. 24, in page 10, line 31, leave out from 'granted' to 'together' in line 34.

No. 25, in page 10, line 35, after 'them' insert 'in their applications'.

No. 26, in page 10, line 36, at end insert—

'(ii) those who are for the time being shown in the record kept under section 6 of this Act as voting

[Mr. Barron]

by post at elections of the kind in question (excluding those so shown whose applications under subsection (2) above to vote by proxy at the election have been granted), together with the addresses provided by them in their applications under that section or, as the case may be, subsection (2) above as the addresses to which their ballot papers are to be sent, and'.

No. 27, in page 10, line 40, leave out 'included' and insert 'shown'.

No. 28, in page 10, line 44, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 8

PROXIES AT ELECTIONS

Amendment made: No. 29, in page 12, leave out lines 26 and 27—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 9

VOTING AS PROXY

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 12, line 41, leave out

'of proxies entitled to vote by post at'

and insert

'kept under subsection (7) below in respect of'.

No. 31, in page 13, line 7, leave out 'and' and insert 'or

(b) the address provided by the applicant in his application as the address to which his ballot paper is to be sent is not in the same area as the elector's qualifying address or, where the elector is registered in pursuance of an overseas elector's declaration, the address specified in the declaration in accordance with section 2(4) of this Act'.

No. 32, in page 13, line 8, leave out '*(b)*' and insert 'and'.

No. 33, in page 13, line 8, at end insert—

'(4A) For the purposes of this section, two addresses are in the same area only if—

(a) both addresses are in the same parliamentary constituency in Greater London or in the same parliamentary constituency in a metropolitan county in England,

(b) both addresses are in the same electoral division of a non-metropolitan county in England and, if either address is in a parish, both are in the same parish,

(c) both addresses are in the same electoral division of a county in Wales and in the same community,

(d) both addresses are in the same electoral division in Scotland, or

(e) both addresses are in the same ward in Northern Ireland.'

No. 34, in page 13, line 15, after 'them', insert 'in their applications'.

No. 35, in page 13, line 22, leave out

'in the case of an election in Great Britain'.

No. 36, in page 13, line 28, leave out from beginning to 'or' in line 34.

No. 37, in page 13, line 39, at end insert—

'(6A) Where, in the case of a particular election, a person included in the record kept under subsection (5) above in respect of elections of the kind in question applies to the registration officer for his ballot paper to be sent to a different address in the United Kingdom, the registration officer shall grant the application if it meets the prescribed requirements'.

No. 38, in page 13, line 41, leave out

'("the list of proxies entitled to vote by post")'.

No. 39, in page 13, line 42, after second 'of' insert '*(a)*'.

No. 40, in page 13, line 44, leave out from 'question' to 'together' in line 1 on page 14.

No. 41, in page 14, line 2, after 'them', insert

'in their applications under that subsection or, as the case may be, subsection (6A) above'.

No. 42, in page 14, line 3, at end insert

'and

(b) those whose applications under subsection (6) above have been granted in respect of the election concerned, together with the addresses provided by them in their applications as the addresses to which their ballot papers are to be sent.'

No. 43, in page 14, line 15, after

'*(a)*', insert 'if he applies to the registration officer to be removed,

(aa) where he was included in the record on the ground mentioned in subsection (4)*(a)* above'.

No. 44, in page 14, line 25, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 11

OFFENCES AS TO DECLARATIONS, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 45, in page 15, line 12, after 'Act', insert

'or attests an application under section 6 or 7 of this Act when he knows that he is not authorised to do so or that it contains a statement which is false'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 16

COMBINATION OF POLLS AT LOCAL ELECTIONS

Amendment made: No. 46, in page 18, line 2, after 'parish', insert 'or community'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 18

TIMING OF ELECTIONS

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 47, in page 18, line 41, leave out 'Christmas Day' and insert

'Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 48 to 51.

Mr. Mellor: The amendment gives effect to undertakings which I gave in response to a debate instigated by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

Mr. Kaufman: This group of amendments is very close to the heart of Mr. Don Storer of the national agents' office at Walworth road. We are grateful to the Minister for moving them, and we carry on on our triumphant path.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 19, line 7, leave out from 'the' to 'and' in line 8 and insert

'words "Sunday", "Christmas Day", and "Good Friday" there shall be inserted respectively the words "Saturday", "Christmas Eve" and "Maundy Thursday"'.

No. 49, in page 19, line 16, leave out 'Christmas Day' and insert

'Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday'.

No. 50, in page 19, line 27, leave out 'a Christmas Day' and insert

'Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday'.

No. 51, in page 19, line 42, leave out 'Christmas Day' and insert

'Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 20

ORDINARY ELECTIONS OF PARISH AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS: INSUFFICIENT NOMINATIONS

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 21, line 30 at end insert

'; but the powers mentioned in paragraph *(b)* above shall not be exercised before the expiry of the period of 35 days (computed according to section 40 of that Act) beginning with the day on which the election was held'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 53.

Mr. Mellor: On the basis of Christmas coming in February, this is a gift to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Mr. Beith: Not only to me, but to the National Association of Local Parish Councils, of which I am a vice-president. I am grateful to the Minister for agreeing to this change in the timetable arrangements. I thank him for responding so readily to the representations of parish councils.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 53, in page 21, line 34, at end insert

'and section 40(3) of that Act (computation of time) shall apply for the purposes of subsection (2) above as it applies for the purposes of section 39'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 26

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 54, in page 22, line 41, after '11', insert

'[Voting at special polling stations in Northern Ireland]'.

No. 55, in page 22, line 42, after 'of', insert

'and Schedule *[Special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* to'.

No. 56, in page 22, line 42, after 'sections', insert 'and that Schedule'.

No. 57, in page 23, line 6, after '11', insert

'[Voting at special polling stations in Northern Ireland]'.

No. 58, in page 23, line 6, after 'of', insert

'and Schedule *[Special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* to'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 28

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT.

Amendment made: No. 59, in page 23, line 24, leave out from 'except' to 'shall' in line 25 and insert

'the provisions mentioned in subsection (2A) below).'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I beg to move amendment No. 60, in page 23, line 28, leave out 'and for different purposes'.

I am grateful to the Chair for selecting the amendment. In Committee, the Minister undertook to do some research into the distinction between "different provisions" and "different purposes". It appears to me that if there is a distinction and if a provision can include several purposes, it would be awkward to bring only part of a provision into force by an order.

I hope that the Minister is now in a position to clarify the necessity for both expressions.

Mr. Mellor: The one which gave difficulty was the use of the phrase "for different purposes". I am advised that this is perhaps a more commonplace piece of drafting than the right hon. Gentleman thought. The Representation of the People Act 1969 included a similar provision, and there are other instances.

I shall give three random examples of how the phrase may be used in the hope of persuading the right hon. Gentleman that there is merit in it. Regarding penalties, schedule 2 increases the penalties for various offences under the 1983 legislation. The commencement order would bring the new penalties into effect on a particular day, except for the purpose of any proceedings which have been instituted before that day. A distinction could be drawn which is based on the words "for different purposes". Without them that distinction would be difficult to make.

Similarly, on election petitions, paragraph 48 of schedule 3 increases the security for costs on the trial of an election petition. The commencement order would bring the new securities into force on a particular day, except for the purpose of a petition which had been presented before that day.

Finally, regarding the election timetable, paragraph 73 of schedule 3 increases the length of the timetable of a parliamentary election. The new timetable would come into operation on such and such a day except for the purposes of any election for which the writ had been issued before that day. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman finds that helpful.

Mr. Powell: I understand that without these words it would be impossible for a commencement order to make transitional provisions. That is obviously convenient, and therefore I am happy to beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 61 in page 23, line 29 at end insert—

'(2A) Those provisions are—

(a) sections 24(1) and 26(1) of this Act, this section, the amendment made by paragraph 18 of Schedule 3 to this Act and the repeal made by the entry in Schedule 4 to this Act relating to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (which come into force on the day on which this Act is passed), and

(b) Schedule *[Special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* to this Act (which may be brought into force under section *[Voting at special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* of this Act).'.

No. 62, in page 23, line 31 at end insert—

'and section *[Voting at special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* of and Schedule *[Special polling stations in Northern Ireland]* to this Act extend to Northern Ireland only.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

New Schedule

SPECIAL POLLING STATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

PART I

RIGHT TO VOTE AT SPECIAL POLLING STATIONS

1.—(1) Where, in the case of a person entitled to vote as an elector at a parliamentary election in Northern Ireland, the absent voters list shows that a special polling station is allotted to him he may, notwithstanding anything in section 5 of this Act, vote only in person at that polling station.

(2) Where a person applies to the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (in this Schedule referred to as "the electoral

[Mr. Powell]

officer") to vote at a particular parliamentary election in Northern Ireland at a special polling station, the electoral officer shall grant the application if—

(a) he is satisfied that the applicant's circumstances on the date of the poll will be or are likely to be such that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the polling station allotted or likely to be allotted to him under the parliamentary elections rules,

(b) he is satisfied that the applicant is or will be registered in the register of parliamentary electors, and

(c) the application meets the prescribed requirements.

(3) The electoral officer shall allot a special polling station to any person whose application under this paragraph is granted and shall send him a notice setting out the situation of the special polling station allotted to him and giving such other information as may be prescribed.

(4) There shall be included in the absent voters list in respect of each parliamentary election in Northern Ireland a list of persons whose applications under this paragraph have been granted, setting out, in the case of each person, the situation of the special polling station allotted to him and giving such other information as may be prescribed.

(5) For the purposes of this paragraph, the electoral officer—

(a) shall designate special polling places and may by further designations from time to time alter any designation under this paragraph,

(b) shall publish such notice as he thinks is required of the situation of any place or places currently designated under this paragraph, and

(c) shall in respect of each parliamentary election, provide a special polling station in each special polling place, unless he is satisfied that the number of persons likely to vote there at that election does not justify it.

(6) Sub-paragraph (5) above has effect notwithstanding anything in section 18 of the principal Act.

PART II

RULES RELATING TO SPECIAL POLLING STATIONS

2. The paragraphs in this Part of this Schedule shall have effect for all purposes as additional rules in Schedule 1 to the principal Act.

3. The official mark on the ballot paper of those voting in respect of a constituency at a special polling station—

(a) shall be different from the official mark on the ballot papers of those voting at the same election in respect of the constituency at polling stations allotted to them under the parliamentary elections rules, and

(b) shall be kept secret;

and an interval of seven years shall intervene between the use of the same official mark on ballot papers of those voting at special polling stations.

4.—(1) The electoral officer shall provide each presiding officer at a special polling station with a list (in this Schedule referred to as "the special polling list") of those electors to whom the special polling station has been allotted, showing for each elector—

(a) the constituency in respect of which he is or appears from the electors lists concerned to be entitled to be registered, and

(b) his electoral number.

(2) Rule 7(6) of the parliamentary elections rules applies for the purposes of this paragraph.

5.—(1) The electoral officer may, after such consultation as appears to him to be desirable, appoint persons (including candidates and their election agents) to attend special polling stations as observers, and each appointment of an observer—

(a) shall be made in writing, and

(b) shall indicate the polling station or polling stations to which he is assigned.

(2) References in this Schedule to observers are references to observers appointed under this paragraph.

6. —(1) When the electoral officer has received the ballot boxes and packets from all the special polling stations, he shall in the presence of each candidate wishing to attend or (if a candidate so chooses) his agent—

(a) open each ballot box and count and record the number of ballot papers in it,

(b) verify each ballot paper account, and

(c) in the case of a general election or two or more by-elections, sort the ballot papers into separate packets for each constituency.

(2) The electoral officer shall give notice in writing to the candidates of the time and place at which he will begin to count the ballot papers under this paragraph, and no person other than the candidates or (where they so choose) their agents may be present unless permitted by the electoral officer.

(3) A person not entitled to attend at the counting of ballot papers under this paragraph shall not be permitted to do so unless the electoral officer—

(a) is satisfied that the efficient counting of the ballot papers will not be impeded, and

(b) has either consulted the candidates or, as the case may be, their agents or thought it impracticable to do so.

(4) The electoral officer shall give to the candidates or, as the case may be, their agents all such reasonable facilities for overseeing the proceedings, and all such information with respect to them, as he can give them consistently with the orderly conduct of the proceedings and the discharge of his duties in connection with them.

(5) The electoral officer shall verify each ballot paper account by comparing it with the number of ballot papers recorded by him, and the unused and spoilt ballot papers in his possession and the tendered votes lists (opening and resealing the packets containing unused and spoilt ballot papers) and shall draw up a statement as to the result of the verification, which any candidate or, as the case may be, his agent may copy.

(6) In the case of a general election or two or more by-elections, each packet of ballot papers for a constituency, accompanied by a statement of the number of ballot papers, shall be sent to the place where the votes for that constituency are to be counted and the votes given on the ballot papers may, when—

(a) in the presence of the counting agents appointed under rule 30 of the parliamentary elections rules, the number of ballot papers in the packet has been counted and compared with the statement, and

(b) those ballot papers have been mixed with the ballot papers from at least one ballot box not used at a special polling station,

be counted in accordance with the parliamentary elections rules (other than rule 45(1), (1A) and (5)).

(7) In any other case, the votes given on any ballot papers counted under this paragraph may, when they have been mixed with the ballot papers from at least one ballot box not used at a special polling station, be counted in accordance with the parliamentary elections rules (other than rule 45(1), (1A) and (5)).

(8) References in this paragraph to a candidate's agent are references to his election agent or to his counting agent appointed under rule 30 of the parliamentary elections rules to attend at the counting of the votes.

7.—(1) On the completion of the counting at a contested election, the electoral officer shall, in relation to votes cast at special polling stations, forward to the Clerk of the Crown for Northern Ireland—

(a) the ballot paper accounts and the statements of rejected ballot papers and of the result of the verification of the ballot paper accounts,

(b) the tendered votes list, the list of votes marked by the presiding officer, and the related statements,

(c) the packets of counterfoils, and

(d) the special polling lists,

endorsing on each packet a description of its contents and the date of the election to which they relate.

(2) Rules 55(2) to (4) and 59 of the parliamentary elections rules apply for the purposes of this paragraph.

PART III

MODIFICATIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS RULES

8. Subject to the rules in Part II of this Schedule, the parliamentary elections rules shall have effect in relation to special polling stations so far as applicable to them, but subject to the modifications made by this Part of this Schedule.

9. References to the election shall in the case of a general election or two or more by-elections be read as references to the elections in all the constituencies concerned in Northern Ireland and references to candidates at the election shall be construed accordingly.

10. Reference to a candidate's polling agent appointed to attend at polling station shall be read as references to an observer assigned to that station.

11. References to the register of parliamentary electors for an election shall be read as references to the special polling list for that election.

12. Rule 5(2) shall apply to applications to vote at a special polling station and to other applications and notices about voting at such stations.

13. Rule 20(2) and (3) shall not apply.

14. Rules 23, 24 and 25(1) to (4) shall not apply.

15. Rules 28 and 29(3)*(c)* and *(d)* shall not apply.

16. Rule 30(1) to (9) shall not apply.

17. Rule 31 shall have effect as if—

(a) the reference to counting the votes were a reference to counting the ballot papers under this Schedule, and

(b) references to provisions of section 66 of the principal Act were references to those provisions as they have effect by virtue of paragraph 27 below.

18. In rule 32—

(a) paragraph (1)*(a)* and *(e)*, and

(b) paragraphs (2), (3) and (4),

shall not apply and the presiding officer shall not admit a person to a special polling station as observer except on production of his appointment.

19. Rule 35(1) shall have effect as if the question that may be put under sub-paragraph *(a)*(i) were—"Are you the person shown in the special polling list for this election as follows?" *(read the whole entry from the list.)*

20. Rule 36(1) shall have effect as if the reference to a candidate or his election agent were omitted.

21. Rule 39 shall not apply.

22. Rule 40(1) shall apply as if, for sub-paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)*, there were substituted a reference to a particular elector named in the special polling list.

23. Rules 44 and 45 shall not apply.

PART IV

MODIFICATIONS OF REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACTS

24. The Representation of the People Acts shall have effect as if the functions of the electoral officer under this Schedule were—

(a) in the case of functions under paragraph 1(2) and (4) above, functions as registration officer, and

(b) in any other case, functions as returning officer.

25. The reference in section 53(1)*(c)* of the principal Act to voting by post or proxy includes a reference to voting at a special polling station.

26. Section 65(3) of the principal Act shall have effect as if the reference to counting the votes included a reference to counting the ballot papers under this Schedule.

27. Section 66 of the principal Act shall have effect as if—

(a) the duty imposed by subsection (1) were imposed also on observers,

(b) the reference to the register of electors included a reference to the special polling list, and

(c) references to the counting of the votes included a reference to counting the ballot papers under this Schedule.

28. Paragraph 5A of Schedule 2 to the principal Act shall apply to applications under paragraph 1 above.

29. The reference in section 5(5) of this Act to a polling station does not include a reference to a special polling station.

30. The references in section 11(3) of this Act to section 7 of this Act include a reference to paragraph 1 above.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1

MANNER OF VOTING

Amendments made: No. 64, in page 24, line 16, after 'kind', insert 'or'.

No. 65, in line 23, after 'kind', insert 'or'.

No. 66, in page 25, line 18, at end insert—

'(1A) Provision requiring a person applying under section 7 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 to do so in person, producing a document of a prescribed description.'.

No. 67, in line 33, after 'application', insert 'or applications'.

No. 68, in line 46, leave out 'by virtue of paragraph *(a)* above'.

No. 69, in line 47, after 'granted', insert 'by virtue of paragraph *(a)* above.'

No. 70, in page 26, line 26, after 'application', insert 'or applications'.

No. 71, in line 28, leave out from 'effect', to end of line 33 and insert—

'*(a)* where the proxy's application or applications were based on his entitlement as elector to vote by post, as if an application by him under section 9(4)*(a)* of this Act to vote by post as proxy at elections of the kind or kinds in question had been granted on that date, and

(b) where the proxy's application was based on the situation of the address to which his ballot paper was to be sent, as if an application by him under section 9(4)*(b)* of this Act to vote by post as proxy at parliamentary elections had been granted on that date.'—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 3

MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL ACT

Mr. Brittan: I beg to move amendment No. 72, in page 29, line 29, after '(2)', insert—

'*(a)* at the end of paragraph *(a)* there shall be inserted the words "and, in particular, they shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled" and

(b) in paragraph'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 73.

Mr. Brittan: These amendments require those who are responsible for the designation of polling places at parliamentary elections in England and Wales to designate, so far as is reasonable and practicable, places which are accessible to disabled people. They were tabled in response to an undertaking given in Committee to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). He moved two amendments. The first sought to enable disabled electors to vote at any polling station in their constituency or electoral area, and the second sought to apply to the designation of polling places the access criteria which apply under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

The sense of the debate was that the former amendment should not be pursued, and these amendments are essentially redrafts of the latter amendment. Amendments are made to subsections (2) and (3) of section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. Those are the provisions that govern the designation of parliamentary polling places in England, Wales and Scotland. The district or London borough council, and in Scotland the returning officer, is responsible for the designation of polling places and has to exercise the powers with a view to giving all the electors such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The amendments add a further requirement to the effect that in particular the council or returning officer shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate only places which are accessible to disabled electors. The words "reasonable

[Mr. Brittan]

and practicable" are used in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Therefore, it is appropriate to use them in this legislation.

The amendments do not affect the designation of parliamentary polling stations in Northern Ireland, because those are governed by separate legislation.

I commend the amendents to the House.

9.30 pm

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): We welcome the Government's commitment to encourage returning officers so far as is practicable and reasonable to designate as polling stations buildings accessible to electors who are disabled. As the Home Secretary has said, this follows the commitment given in Committee to the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones). They pointed out that thousands of disabled people experience great difficulty in getting to polling stations, not to mention the deterrent effect of high steps and narrow entrances and corridors at the polling station itself. Those difficulties are both unnecessary and undesirable.

It is extremely important to ensure that every citizen entitled to do so is is able to exercise his civic and political rights. We accept that postal and proxy votes are available for such individuals and that availability will be extended by the Bill. Nevertheless, as every hon. Member knows from his own experience at election time, many disabled people, especially those disabled by age infirmity, want to go to the polling station and vote in person just like other people and to feel part of the democratic process. They should be given the facility and the ability to be part of that process.

In our view, therefore, the Government should insist that all polling stations should be accessible at all times to all people, including those who are disabled. It is not unremarkable that the Government can apparently find sufficient money to extend to franchise to British citizens resident abroad but not the extra resources required to ensure that all polling stations are accessible to all disabled people so that British citizens living in this country who happen to be disabled can exercise their vote. I do not wish to sound churlish, and we in no way dissent from what the Government are doing, save to hope that they will give greater encouragement to returning officers to ensure that every polling station is accessible to the disabled so that those people can cast their votes in the same way as other citizens eligible to do so.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On behalf of the alliance, I welcome the Government's acceptance of the need for as much effort as possible to be made by returning officers to ensure that the disabled, if they so wish, can vote in person rather than having to use postal or proxy votes.

As the Home Secretary knows, the disabled are troubled by physical obstacles such as steps and slopes and —I hope that putting this on record will ensure that it goes through into the planning of polling station distribution—long distances between the entrance to the building and the polling place. Handicapped or disabled people having arrived by car or public transport sometimes have to make a phenomenal effort to get to the part of the building where they have to vote. This applies particularly in schools. Even if it means less use of schools, if they are organised in such a way as to make a polling station close to the entrance difficult to arrange, I hope that a variety of premises will be considered so that at all times and in all circumstances the disabled are able to exercise their vote in person. As the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) has said, they should be able to exercise their franchise as they would wish, to be treated as normal members of society and not discriminated against in any way.

The amendments are good amendments and I hope that they will be widely interpreted in the spirit in which they have been introduced and accepted by the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 73, in page 29, line 30, at end insert—

'(1A) In subsection (3) of that section at the end of paragraph *(a)* there shall be inserted the words "and, in particular, he shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled".'. —*[Mr. Brittan.]*

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 74, in page 35, line 3, after subsection (7) insert—

'(7A) A meeting shall not be deemed to be a public meeting for the purpose of this section unless not less than two thirds of the seats at such a meeting are open to any members of the public who attend while they are unoccupied, provided that a member of the public may be excluded from such a meeting if the person by or on whose behalf the meeting is convened believes on reasonable grounds that such a member is attending for the purposes of causing disorder.'.

I am moving the amendment on behalf of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who is unable to be in his place this evening. The amendment also stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) who also cannot be here; he has a bad cold.

The wording of the amendment explains the worry that some of us have. The issue was canvassed in Committee, when the Minister's reply suggested that if he could find a way of solving the mischief with which the amendment deals he would accept it.

This is the last opportunity that we shall have for some time to debate the subject. The mischief with which the amendment deals worries hon. Members on both sides of the House. That mischief concerns a public meeting which is not really a public meeting, held during an election campaign. Unfortunately, the police cannot attend such a meeting under the present law.

I need not say much to identify the political party—the National Front—which is good at holding closed meetings which are said to be public meetings but which, in fact, are not public. They are held behind closed doors and the public are not admitted. The object of such meetings is to disrupt and cause trouble, often of a racist or religious kind, because the object of that nasty little organisation is the absolute negation of democracy.

If, during an election campaign, a meeting was designated to be a public meeting, it would, under the amendment, have to be such, with two thirds of the seats being available to members of the public. We would thereby stop the mischief. If, at a public meeting of that sort, there were racist, disruptive, anti-Semitic or anti-religious comment, the police would have right of entry and prosecutions could be brought against the perpetrators of the nastiness.

The Minister may say in reply that he hopes that a solution to the matter will be found. In the meantime, I rest

content on the wording of the amendment. If the Minister replies that the search for a solution to this nastiness will continue beyond the passage of the Bill, I will beg leave to withdraw the amendment, having placed on record the fact that we continue to be worried about the matter.

We believe in open democracy, with the public having the right to attend public meetings the purpose of which is not to purvey dirt, filth and smear but to purvey to the public at large the intentions of the political party.

Mr. Mellor: I gave a full account of our views in Committee, when I made it clear that I was not in favour of the election entitlements to public rooms being abused. I do not believe, any more than the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) does, that the amendment would provide the solution. However, we shall continue to consider the matter, not least in the review of public order law that is going on, and any further thoughts on the subject will be gratefully received.

Mr. Bermingham: In the light of that assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 75, in page 35, line 4 leave out from beginning to 'Subsections' in line 16 and insert—

'38. For section 96 (schools and rooms for local election meetings) there shall be substituted—

"*Schools and Rooms for Local Election Meetings*

96. — (1) Subject to the provisions of this section, a candidate at a local government election is entitled for the purpose of holding public meetings in furtherance of his candidature to the use free of charge at reasonable times between the last day on which notice of the election may be published in accordance with rules made under section 36 or, in Scotland, section 42 above and the day preceding the day of election of—

(a) a suitable room in the premises of a school to which this section applies;

(b) a meeting room to which this section applies.

(2) This section applies—

(a) in England and Wales, to a county or voluntary school situated in the electoral area for which the candidate is standing (or, if there is no such school in the area, in any such school in an adjacent electoral area) or in a parish or community, as the case may be, in part comprised in that electoral area; and

(b) in Scotland, to any school (not being an independent school within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980) situated in the electoral area for which the candidate is standing (or, if there is no such school in the area, in any such school in an adjacent electoral area).

(3) This section applies—

(a) in England and Wales, to any meeting room situated in the electoral area for which the candidate is standing or in a parish or community, as the case may be, in part comprised in that electoral area, the expense of maintaining which is payable wholly or mainly out of public funds or out of any rate, or by a body whose expenses are so payable;

(b) in Scotland, to any meeting room the expense of maintaining which is payable by the council of a region, islands area or district.

(4)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I suggest that it would be for the convenience of the House to discuss at the same time Government amendment No. 89.

Mr. Mellor: These amendments are designed to cure a small anomaly. Candidates have the right to use local authority meeting rooms as well as school rooms at parliamentary elections throughout Great Britain and at local government elections in Scotland, but not at local government elections in England and Wales. It is proposed to give candidates at local government elections in England and Wales the right to use meeting rooms as well as school rooms.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the amendment, which improves the state of the law. It is important that we maintain provisions for the availability of schools and public meeting rooms for candidates. When there are several candidates seeking rooms in the same locality, it can be difficult for them to find rooms in which to hold election meetings. There has been a decline in some areas in the number of public halls and public rooms that are available. A number of traditional venues are no longer available for that purpose.

Sometimes education authorities, local authorities and even, dare one say, caretakers are unhappy about the extra burdens imposed on them during elections. It is an essential part of our democratic process that facilities should be available for candidates to conduct such meetings. The inconvenience is a very small price to pay for that provision.

With regard to the use of schools, the meetings that candidates hold are far less of an inconvenience than is polling day itself, because those meetings do not interfere with the normal conduct of the school. Indeed, they are often advantageous in that they bring into the school people who see the work that children have put on the walls. Come polling day, if returning officers are not careful to look for alternative accommodation, the too frequent and too ready use of schools can pose considerable inconvenience for the conduct of education, particularly in special schools. I welcome an earlier amendment that will mean that returning officers will have to be more careful in their choice of accommodation. The availability of public rooms for meetings is an essential part of our democratic process.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 76, in page 36, line 16, leave out from 'section' to end of line 17 and insert '136 (security for costs)'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government Nos. 77 to 81 and Government amendment No. 91.

Mr. Mellor: The aim of these amendments is to allow the rules of court to prescribe extended periods in relation to the security for the costs of trial of an election petition. I hope that the amendments, which are in keeping with the thoughts of the parties on this matter, will be acceptable to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 77, in page 36, line 18, leave out 'paragraph' and insert 'subsection (2)'.

No. 78, in page 36, line 22, leave out 'paragraph' and insert 'subsection (2)'.

No. 79, in page 36, line 23, leave out 'and'.

No. 80 in page 36, line 24, leave out 'paragraph' and insert 'subsection (2)'.

No. 81, in page 36, line 30, at end insert

'and

(d) the following provisions shall cease to have effect—

(i) in subsection (3) the words "not exceeding five days after the presentation of the petition";

[Mr. Mellor]

(ii) in subsection (4) the words "not exceeding five days after service of the notice";
(iii) subsection 5*(b)*;
(iv) in subsection (7) the words "not exceeding five days".'.—*[Mr. Brittan.]*

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 82, in page 41, line 27, leave out from 'stations)' to end of line 28 and insert

'for the words from "a notice" onwards there shall be substituted the words "the notice 'Vote for one candidate only. Put no other mark on the ballot paper, or your vote may not be counted.'".'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 84, 86, 88 and 92.

Mr. Mellor: At an earlier stage I was foolish enough to involve myself in a battle of semantics with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who was then able to pray in aid the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), and I was severely worsted. To show that I have profited from the experience, I bring forward amendments to do what that particularly effective combination of hon. Gentlemen wished me to do.

Mr. Beith: I very much welcome the Minister's conversion. At an earlier stage and an incautious moment he thought us pedantic when we sought to ensure that the words on the ballot paper conveyed to the electorate what they were intended to convey. I hope that when he goes home and settles down to a hot toddy and a pile of back numbers of the *Conservative Monthly News*, getting a much earlier night than he might otherwise have got, he will sit back and realise that he has improved the use of the English language on ballot papers from that which was originally proposed. That will not be a bad thing.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 83, in page 42, line 22, leave out first 'on' and insert 'not later than'.

This is another attempt to ingratiate myself with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed who was rightly concerned at the absence of rules for the return of deposits. We provided in the Bill that it should be done on what would effectively have been the Monday following a Thursday poll. We became aware that that might preclude a returning officer who was particularly efficient from returning the money on the Friday. The substitution of "not later than" for "on" will enable a particularly diligent returning officer to return the money before the weekend. Certainly he would have to return it the day after the weekend. I hope that the amendment commends itself to the House.

9.45 pm

Mr. Beith: Once again, I find myself thanking the Minister. When the Bill was introduced, the rules on the returning of deposits were unclear and the return could be delayed for a considerable time. We are now talking about a larger deposit, although nothing like as large as the Government intended originally to introduce. However, the prompt return of the deposit is obviously desirable and important and I very much welcome the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 84, in page 42, line 34, leave out from 'words' to 'in' and insert

'"VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE ONLY".'.

No. 86, line 39, leave out from 'direction' to 'and' in line 40 and insert

'"VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE ONLY".'.

No. 88, in page 43, line 22, leave out 'only candidate, and put' and insert 'one candidate only'. —*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 4

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 89, in page 45, leave out 48.

No. 90, in page 46, line 52, leave out '191*(a)*' insert '191(1)*(a)*'.

No. 91, in page 46, line 8, column 3, at end ins

'In section 136, in subsection (3), the words "not exce five days after the presentation of the petition", in subsecti the words from "not" to "notice", subsection (5)*(b)* a subsection (7) the words not exceeding five days".'.

No. 92, in page 47, leave out lines 14 15.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Order for Third Reading read—[Queen's Co signified.]

9.47 pm

Mr. Brittan: I beg to move, That the Bill be now the Third time.

When we introduced the Bill we had four objectives: first, an extension of the franchise to B citizens resident abroad; secondly, changes in a voting arrangements to enfranchise those away on ho on polling day; thirdly, an increase in the depo discourage the frivolous candidate, with a reduction threshold to protect the interests of the smaller pa finally, to take the opportunity of making all the nece but less spectacular changes in the electoral mach which have been on the stocks since the last Representation of the People Bill in 1969.

The Bill establishes the principle that British cit outside the public sector should not be disfranchised more than those within it, because they are resident a on the qualifying date. Many of my hon. Friends be that the five-year period, the maximum length Parliament, during which the Bill allows British cit to qualify as overseas electors is not long enough. I great sympathy for that view. The Government orig proposed a longer period, but I thought that in introd a new principle of this kind it was right that we sh proceed at a deliberate pace in accordance with maximum degree of acquiescence, if not approv believe that with the passage of time the anxieties on these provisions will prove unfounded, and I very hope that it will not be long before it will be possib extend the five-year limit. We shall have to see ho changes that we are introducing this year fare in pra

Our debates on absent voting have concentrated c special position of Northern Ireland. The Governme happy to have moved amendments putting Nor Ireland absent voters on the same footing as those in Britain, with the reserve power that can be exer should the need arise. Of course, we all hope that the will not arise. The main achievement is to have rep the indefensible provisions which were previously o statute book, which had the effect of imposing a civic disability on those who committed no greater sin to be away on holiday on polling day. In to circumstances, with increasing numbers going on hol and with a tendency for elections to take place durin

summer rather more frequently than was once the case, it would have been indefensible to leave the anomaly on the statute book.

Having considered these matters over the years, and most recently prior to the present occasion when I was Minister of State, Home Office, it is a matter of great pleasure and pride to be able to put forward and see entering shortly, I hope, the statute book a provision which enables those who are on holiday to vote, notwithstanding their absence from their normal residence on polling day.

On the question of the deposit, we are glad to have found in £500 a figure which seems to command general support. In my view, the figure is very much on the low side, and that of course was the view of the Select Committee. It should not be regarded as a final figure. It would be wrong for us to allow a long period of time to elapse before a change is made.

Any change that is made should be made deliberately, and it will have to be made by fresh legislation, but, in general, the principle which the Government will support is that the deposit should rise in line with decreases in the value of money—I hope that those will be gradual. It is wrong that we should wait for so many years, as we have since 1918, before looking at this important matter again. The figure of £500 is reasonable for today, but it is not a matter to pass unnoticed again for so long.

The main changes to which I have referred — important as they are—take up less than half the pages of the Bill. The fact that so many of the smaller changes have gone unopposed is a tribute to those who took part in the consultations on behalf of the political parties and the local authority associations. We leave the detailed provisions of the Representation of the People Acts, the raw material from which our democracy is constructed, in a better state than we found them.

It has been most useful for all involved, in the House and outside, to go through the Bill's provisions and try to bring them up to date and to deal with a number of matters which are individually of little importance but collectively put democracy into better shape than it was before. Some of the provisions are of considerable importance to individuals, such as the one that we have been discussing this evening about the attempt to ensure that wherever possible disabled people can vote in person, not just by post.

I should like to thank all those who have helped to make these debates a success and to secure an outcome which does not give anyone everything that he wants, but which gives a substantial boost to our democracy by modernising the process of democracy.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has shouldered most of the burden on the Government side, and we owe him a great debt for the care with which he has handled the Bill, for the courtesy with which he has handled the amendments and for his readiness to respond constructively to points put to the Government, from whatever quarter they have come. He can take great pride in and credit for that achievement.

My hon. Friend will join me in thanking the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and his hon. Friends for helping to make the debates for the most part useful and constructive and for securing a high degree of consensus, although I recognise, and would not wish to put words into his mouth, that in some cases he feels that he is making the best of a bad job rather than securing the objective that he would have wished.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has, I fear, but not to his surprise, failed to persuade us on this occasion of the merits of proportional representation, but he has raised a number of valuable detailed points. I hope he feels that we have gone as far as we can to meet them.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has intervened in our debates with his usual perspicacity. I am grateful to him for articulating not just the interests of Northern Ireland but many more broader and important questions that we have needed to consider.

I should like to thank those of my hon. Friends who have intervened. Their interventions have been most welcome and have assisted us greatly.

It is with those words that I wish the Bill godspeed in its passage to another place. We look forward to its early return from there and entry on to the statute book.

9.54 pm

Mr. Kaufman: When the Bill was introduced last autumn, the Opposition had serious reservations about it. Our principal misgivings related to four issues. The first was the introduction of expatriate voting, and the introduction of that regrettable innovation for a period of seven years not only for former voters, but also for minors who never had a vote and for people who did not necessarily intend to return to this country. Secondly, we were concerned about the proposed increase of the election deposit to £1,000, even though with a 5 per cent. threshold for retention. Thirdly, we were worried about the reduction of polling time in parliamentary elections by one hour with the proposal that polls should close at 9 pm instead of at 10 pm. Fourthly, we were concerned about restrictions on absent voting in Northern Ireland compared with Great Britain.

It was because of these four major issues that we voted against the Bill on Second Reading, and warned the Government that they would have all-out opposition to the Bill if they insisted that it go through with its contents as introduced at that time. The Government then, belatedly but sensibly, decided that they would negotiate with us. The outcome has been major changes to the Bill made directly through those negotiations.

On expatriate voting, the duration has been reduced from seven to five years. Under-18s will now not obtain this franchise on reaching the age of 18. Those applying for this franchise will have to commit themselves to not remaining outside the country permanently. The deposit will still go up, and we regret that, but to £500 instead of to £1,000, and the new threshold will be 5 per cent. The closing time for polling in parliamentary elections will remain at 10 pm. Northern Ireland absent votes in all essential respects will be granted on the same basis as in Great Britain, and—an added gain in our view—absent votes for those temporarily out of the country will be exercised by proxy rather than by post, thus reducing the chances of tampering with the ballot.

In addition to those changes that we have achieved on the four major issue that concerned us, we have secured changes, or firm Government commitment to change, on a number of subsidiary but important issues. Provisions for counter-signature for absent voters are to be simplified and clarified, and the right of wardens of old people's homes and sheltered accommodation to be counter-signatories is to be considered favourably by the Government. Absent votes are to be available for electors taken ill or otherwise

[Mr. Kaufman]

becoming physically incapacitated after the final date for claiming a postal vote. There is to be a sensible extention of the list of dies non in the election timetable, and there is to be a reduction of the proposed new amounts required as security for costs for court actions in relation to elections. There is no doubt that these changes improve the Bill considerably.

I should like to thank my hon. Friends who have taken an especially active part in the Bill's progress. They have participated actively, constructively and by general consultation within our party in order to put forward our amendments. It is satisfactory to us that the Government have responded so much to our amendments. I join the Secretary of State in the tribute that he has paid to the Under-Secretary for the way in which he has responded to our amendments.

The efforts of my hon. Friends and myself have resulted in important and beneficial changes in what are the most fundamental laws in any democracy, the laws governing the conduct of elections.—*[Interruption.]* It is very nice to see the Liberal party here in quite remarkable strength. I advise you, Mr. Speaker, to take this unrivalled opportunity of memorising their faces.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Representation of the People Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Major.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Kaufman: It is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, which may not easily arise again for the remainder of this Parliament.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It will arise all too often.

Mr. Kaufman: Too often, certainly; however often, too often.

The efforts of my hon. Friends, as I have already said, have resulted in important and beneficial changes in the most fundamental laws in any democracy — the laws governing the conduct of elections. We on the Labour Benches still profoundly regret that the Bill includes any provision for expatriate voting, and that there is any increase in the deposit. But we have done our best during the debate to speak for democracy, regardless of party advantage, and I believe that we have won victories for democracy. It is in that spirit that we now send the Bill on its way.

10.1 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: In the few sentences with which I shall detain the House I deliberately leave out of account the matter of disagreement which was dealt with by Division earlier in today's sitting—a matter which my hon. Friends and I still hope to see resolved in some way before the Bill reaches the statute book.

It fell to me in 1979 to pronounce the last words for my hon. Friends in this House upon the last major preceding act of justice to Northern Ireland, which enabled the electors of Northern Ireland to be represented in this House by the same number of seats as if they were resident in Great Britain. That event is linked with the events of this Bill by an important fact. Both those decisions were taken virtually unanimously by the House. They were taken in co-operation between the Government and Her M Opposition and virtually with no dissent in any pa Chamber. That is how, as long as the position of N Ireland in the Union is not wholly secure, every needs to be made in the government of that Pro needs to be the united and unanimous act of this H Parliament, and therefore of the people of this c

I hope to live to see the day when constitue Northern Ireland will return Members for two or the political parties which carry on the political d the United Kingdom, for then and then alone will N Ireland have entered into the full inheritance membership of the United Kingdom. But u happens it is necessary that progress towards ful and full recognition of the status of Northern Irel its people should be made by evident consent— the evident consent which has accompanied the done to Northern Ireland in this Bill which, in the the people of that Province, is its greatest glory.

10.3 pm

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Manchester (Mr. Kaufman) inevitably provokes me by som remarks. I am bound to say that he would n detained the House unduly long had he listed tho hon. Friends who contributed so helpfully proceedings on the Bill. They are a gallant few. T almost outnumbered by the number of my hon. who assisted me in the course of the proceeding Bill, and to whom I express my thanks.

Had I not been firmly committed to the belief t Bills should be taken in Committee on the Floo House and not upstairs, a great many of our proc on the Bill would have been upstairs—and that consent of one of the other parties in this House

Mr. Kaufman: It was our motion, which su that the Bill be considered on the Floor of the Hou was carried by the House. The hon. Gentleman ha memory.

Mr. Beith: I remember very well the discussi preceded that motion. How much longer our proc would have been if the Government had not co slightly late stage to realise that consensus has its Consensus is not a fashionable doctrine in Gov circles at the moment, but the Home Secretary grasped it. Although hon. Members have everything that they wanted, the Bill is much im I applaud the Home Secretary's grasping the co It has shortened proceedings on the Bill immea We might have been here in August if such a deci not been taken.

The Bill represents improvements in several im respects. Like the Home Secretary, I believe provision of postal votes for people who are on during elections is long overdue. It is quite wr citizens should have been prevented from exercis vote because of long-standing holiday plans. T especially true for the 1983 general election.

Unlike the Labour party, I believe that it is provide people who live overseas, who are citizen United Kingdom and who have an interest in it with the opportunity to cast a vote. Many are Britain in capacities other than those of civil serv as members of the Armed Forces, who had

previously. We warmly welcome their right to cast a vote, but it is severely restricted and there will be much disappointment among those who thought that they would have a vote for some time but who will be lucky to have a vote at one general election.

Mr. Brittan: It is a start.

Mr. Beith: The Home Secretary believes that it is the thin end of the wedge. If it is, we shall help him drive the wedge a little further.

Other useful provisions ensure that the government of Britain can be carried on in circumstances that we do not want to dwell on. There are significant improvements in the Bill as compared with that which was originally presented to us. Perhaps the most obvious concerns deposits. The Government originally proposed that the deposit should be £1,000. That proposal was supported by Labour Members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. However, the Government overlooked the strength of our opposition and the sudden conversion of the Labour party, which was perhaps influenced by experience. The Labour party lost 119 deposits at the 1983 election. I must assure the House that, as amended, the Bill saves the Labour party £56,000 on the basis of the 1983 election results.

A financial deposit is not a sensible test of whether a candidate is legitimate or serious. That is why we have argued for the provision of more signatures than are at present required. Some Conservative Members share that view. The reduction of the deposit from £1,000 to £500 is a welcome improvement, as is the reduction of the threshold. We ought not to discourage people from standing at elections. However unattractive or repugnant we might find the views of some extreme organisations and parties, people should be encouraged to stand as candidates and not be given the excuse that they cannot put their views to the electorate. Even the Bill in its present form might restrict the ability of some groups to field candidates. I do not believe that it will in any way restrict frivolous or commercially minded candidates, who will find the money anyway.

There have been detailed improvements, and the Under-Secretary of State has made several concessions. I welcome the accommodation and helpfulness that he has shown on many detailed matters. We have also resisted some things that might have been included. A section of the Labour party wanted to introduce compulsory voting and would have required every elector to furnish a suitable excuse to the returning officer if he failed to turn up at the polling station. We have successfully resisted the vision of the south Yorkshire Socialist republic writ large, in which electors have to explain themselves to public officials. That has been successfully resisted, so it is not part of the Bill to which we shall give a Third Reading.

However, the Bill retains drawbacks, which are mainly omissions, of which I shall mention two. One is the issue on which the widest consensus——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to call the hon. Gentleman to order, but he should discuss on Third Reading only what is in the Bill.

Mr. Beith: I shall seek to comply with your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

We have sought throughout the Bill to work on the basis of consensus, and I commend the Home Secretary for his grasping of that doctrine. However, had he grasped the consensus between all parties that something should be done about multiple registration, the Bill would have been better. We shall have to wait for a better Bill to ensure that people are properly represented—a Bill that ensures that they are represented under a fair electoral system. I look forward to supporting that Bill from the Government Benches.

10.10 pm

Mr. Bermingham: When the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) comes to draft amendments he can sometimes educate Ministers, and I congratulate him on that. However, when it comes to political intention and ability, he seems to be short on experience. Listening to the will of the people, particularly with regard to the question of how we elect candidates, is not a bad idea. The system that we have had for a number of years, that of single Member constituencies, is one that the people at large feel we should follow. Perhaps this nonsense that we get periodically, which is sometimes called the "We was robbed nonsense" will cease with the passage of the Bill to another place.

Although the Bill goes to the other place, it goes with a number of reservations. I wish to put on record the fact that I hope that the other place will look with some care at the issue of the deposit. I know that the House eventually reached a consensus, but some of us believe in the right of small parties and individuals to stand, and the imposition of a £500 deposit is an unnecessary impediment. After all, in a democracy, any man should be able to stand in his own right. He should not necessarily be debarred by the payment of cash.

Similarly, on a much more human note, although there have been welcome amendments to the Bill regarding the disabled, it still does not get over the basic problem raised by an amendment that dealt with the handicapped. I said when we debated that amendment that I could not see that it was beyond the wit of man to find a solution so that the severely handicapped could vote at the physically nearest polling station, although that might on occasions be in another ward or constituency.

If we are able to make provision for those who serve on polling day, either as polling officials or police officers so that they can vote away from their normal polling station, it is amazing that we cannot find a solution to enable the severely handicapped to vote in a similar way. If we are a humane and tolerant society, and I should like to believe that we still are, we should be able to find a solution to that problem. I hope that the other place will look at this and perhaps the Ministers who serve there will continue to search for a solution to the problem. It concerns only a small number of people; perhaps only a few thousand, but if we are a true democracy we should find a solution to the problem of those few thousand, because it is worth it. It shows that we wish every person to have the right to vote personally.

I hope that the other place will consider with care not only this matter but the point that I made on an earlier amendment which I withdrew, which is that we should continue to search for a solution to prevent the slur upon our democracy which sometimes occurs at these closed "public meetings" when small factions seek to use such occasions to spread the concept of racism, anti-semitism

[Mr. Bermingham]

an the other aims that are pursued by the National Front. That kind of evil in our society needs to be stamped out, so that our society may remain open and democratic.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

PETITION

Concorde (Nuisance)

10.15 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I beg leave to a petition on behalf of 3,000 Cornish electors, whom are my constituents:

The humble petition of the people of Cornwall show in the winter months Concorde causes supersonic ba disturb the undersigned petitioners.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourabl do implore the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry steps to alleviate the nuisance caused by Concorde.

The petition is signed by 3,000 people and it wholehearted support. The boom-booms are a sub imposition and cause a great deal of annoyance an damage. The Minister clearly has it within his po terminate this interruption to Cornish life forthwith petitioners hope that he will do so.

To lie upon the Table.

British Engineers (Nigeria)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am very grateful indeed to have the opportunity to raise on this Adjournment debate the plight of two of my constituents who have been detained in Nigeria since 20 May 1984. Although this matter has received some publicity, it has not been fully aired in this House. The time has come when a number of points of concern should be aired and the Government's view upon them expressed in public.

I shall give the background to the circumstances and express as strongly as I can how I feel about the plight of these two constituents and how their plight might affect relationships between our two countries—relationships which are longstanding and which I hope will continue in the future, despite the present difficulties. These two constituents have been detained for nine months in Nigeria. There is concern as to how they are being treated and when they may be able to return home. Their wives live in my constituency. Their children have not seen their fathers for nine months. The human dimension has reached the stage where additional pressure needs to be applied. I hope the Minister will be able to assure the House that the difficulties which have been experienced, particularly since Christmas, have not only been recounted to the Nigerians, but that they have been led to understand that they are now in danger of losing the goodwill of this country if the detention of my constituents continues.

There is concern as to whether there is a political factor involved in their detention. I hope that this is not so. Nevertheless, it causes me concern. May I therefore ask the Minister to make it clear to the House that the Government give very high priority indeed to ensuring that the process of law in Nigeria, which has had too many interruptions and hiccups, is brought to a quick and speedy conclusion and that any suggestion that my constituents should be subjected to any kind of political pressure is firmly rejected. Therefore, I suggest right at the beginning of my speech, because there is no point in beating about the bush, that the plight of my constituents must not be connected with the trials that have taken place in this country or with the detention in Britain of Nigerians and of Britons in Nigeria.

In particular, we have had in Britain the trial of those involved in the attempt to kidnap Mr. Dikko. It is important that the Government make it clear to the Nigerian Government that, regardless of how they feel about Mr. Dikko and his kind and the trial of the people involved in his kidnapping, people who are in no way connected with that should not be made to suffer for any kind of political reasons.

Britain should not be harbouring the likes of Mr. Dikko, and I should like to see the back of him and all his works from this country. I understand how the Nigerians feel about that. But I cannot stress too highly that people who have had no connection whatever with those circumstances — my constituents and their families — should not be made to suffer on that account. Indeed, they have already suffered too much.

The constituents in question are Mr. Angus Paterson, who lives in Inverurie, and Mr. Kenneth Clarke, who lives in Blackburn. Both those towns are in my constituency. The two men were employed as helicopter engineers by Bristow Helicopters. They were operating under a contract, under which they worked in Nigeria for two months and then returned home to Scotland for two months, until they were arrested on 20 May 1984.

They were arrested after they had serviced an aircraft which immediately afterwards left Nigeria illegally. Since that date they have maintained their complete ignorance of the illegal intentions of the male pilot and his female co-pilot who left on that particular day. I understand that not only are the pilot and his co-pilot back in Britain, but that they have subsequently married and that their happiness in no way detracts from the fact that two innocent people remain detained in Nigeria.

Sheer common sense would suggest that anybody accused, as these men are, of conspiring to steal, and stealing, an aircraft, would not have stayed behind if that had been the reality of what they were doing.

Subsequently, Messrs Clarke and Paterson were detained for many months at police headquarters in Lagos before any charges were brought. They first appeared in court on 12 November, having been originally arrested on 20 May. On that date they were remanded until 23 November and they appeared in court again on 5 December, when bail was refused despite a number of sworn affidavits.

The trial then resumed on 14 December and was adjourned on 21 December, just before Christmas, until 18 January. On 18 January the prosecution withdrew the original charge and the men were released but were immediately rearrested.

After a further delay in which they and their families suffered considerable doubt, uncertainty and depression those charges to which I have already referred were laid —conspiring to steal an aircraft and stealing an aircraft. On 12 February a new trial date was set for 19 March.

Immediately after that, on 15 February, the men were transferred to Kirri Kirri prison, a maximum security prison, where they are now. The first consular visit to them in that prison, I understood, took place today, although I have since clarified that and I understand that a brief visit took place some days ago.

I am sure that we can all appreciate that no maximum security prison is a pleasant place to be. I understand that they are not in comfortable conditions compared to those in which they had been confined hitherto.

Let me at this point pay tribute—I am sure on behalf of the two men—first to the consular officials who, up until the point that they were transferred to Kirri Kirri prison, visited them regularly and gave them practical and, perhaps more importantly, moral support and regular contact. I know that they have continued to work hard to do that.

I also pay tribute to their fellow employees and their company Bristow Helicopters who have supported them throughout and have also ensured that they have had regular visits and practical support. In circumstances where they are faced with so much uncertainty and emotional pressure, such factors cannot be measured, but they are extremely important. I know that my constituents will want their gratitude to be expressed to the people who have visited the men.

I remain concerned about the conditions in which they are detained. I understand that a number of other British prisoners are also detained in that prison in conditions which are extremely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I add, in similar terms to the way in which my hon. Friend is making his case on behalf of his constituents, the name of a man whose family are my constituents and whose last base in Britain was in Bermondsey. I refer to Ronald Goslitski, whose case has been taken up with the Foreign Office.

Again there is a charge pending. The man was arrested and has been held in Benin prison in Nigeria since June of last year. The same concern is expressed on behalf of his family that his time there is uncertain and that perhaps justice is not being done as quickly as it might be done. There needs to be a speedy resolution, divorced from all political overtones.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend will accept that that concern should be added to the concern that he is expressing and be taken up appropriately by the Foreign Office.

Mr. Bruce: I accept my hon. Friend's plea on behalf of his constituent. Naturally, these circumstances cause concern, but I must make it clear that I also recognise that a judicial process is in hand and that a trial date has been set.

I hope that the value of having a debate in advance of the trial is to make it clear that I and the families of the two men have forborne to make public play of their plight until now because we were anxious to ensure that the judicial process followed its proper course. However, the conditions that have arisen over the last three months, with hiccups over their trial, over the charges and so forth, have given cause for concern, as has their transfer to a maximum security prison. The stage has been reached where I am anxious to make it clear through the Minister and direct to the Nigerian Government that if the matter is not resolved speedily and efficiently on 19 March, Britain's relationship with and public opinion in Britain about the Nigerian judicial process will come into question. I hope that the Nigerian authorities would not want that to happen.

An additional matter of concern is that since the men were transferred to the maximum security prison they have been detained under section 2 of the Military Government Order, which I understand is known as the Decree 2 State Security (Detention of Persons). It could mean that, regardless of the outcome of any trial, they are detained indefinitely. I hope that the Government will press with all the authority at their disposal that these men should not be detained in any other way than that related to the specific circumstances of the charges which have been made.

The Nigerian judicial system is modelled on Britain's. It is important in those circumstances that that should mean that the men now get a quick, fair trial with no further delays or hiccups on 19 March and the subsequent days.

It is important to make it clear that British public opinion expects that after that, regardless of the outcome, the men will be returned home and reunited with their wives and families. I pay my tribute to their wives and families, who have been put in very difficult circumstances. The men's wives are very capable and intelligent women, who have borne what they have had to bear in the last nine months bravely and well. However, the uncertainties of the last three months have put considerable pressure on them. If the matter is not resolved speedily, that pressure will begin to bear in an extremely serious way.

It is not necessary for me to point out that the consequences of the delay mean that these fathers of young families have been denied any contact with their children over virtually a full year of Christmas, birthdays, and the usual family festivities. In common humanity, the authorities should recognise that, especially if they think about applying political pressure.

I hope that the Minister can give an assurance tonight that the Government will impress on the Nigerian authorities that, important as the restoration of good relations between Great Britain and Nigeria is, they do not allow the manipulation of the judicial system for political ends. I suggest that that has not yet happened, but if it does, the Government should make it clear that it is intolerable and that commerce is of no value if our citizens are abused by the citizens of any other country. We must make it clear that our relations with another country depend on the fair, honest and objective treatment of our citizens.

The Minister should make it clear to the Nigerian authorities that whether the men are convicted or acquitted at their trial on 19 March, they and their families have suffered too long and are entitled to expect speedy, efficient and fair treatment and to return home to be reunited with their families.

10.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): I fully understand the reasons that led the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) to raise the matter of his two constituents, who are engineers and detained in Nigeria, in this Adjournment debate. I pay tribute to the determination with which he has been protecting the interests of his constituents during the past months and the time of their detention. It would also be appropriate to pay tribute to other hon. Members who have taken an interest in the case, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), who has corresponded with my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) also briefly raised the question of his constituent, Mr. Goslitski.

I understand that Mr. Goslitski has been detained since June 1984 in Benin city prison accused of corruption. There have been regular consular visits to him, but it is rather difficult because of the distance, and access has sometimes been refused. We are, however, affording him all the usual consular protection. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to write to me further about Mr. Goslitski, I shall certainly give him the most up-to-date information that I have.

The protection of the rights of British citizens, as the hon. Member for Gordon will accept, who run into difficulties abroad is a primary function of our diplomatic missions. The detention of a British citizen in a foreign land naturally raises a great deal of public and parliamentary anxiety when the period of detention without trial is prolonged or the conditions of detention are unsatisfactory. His two constituents, Mr. Kenneth Clarke and Mr. Angus Paterson, who are employed by Bristow Helicopters in Nigeria, have been held in Lagos since 19 May 1984.

The Government share the growing anxiety at the delay in bringing their case to a conclusion — which, understandably, is causing great distress to their families. I fully understand the strength of the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the position of the wives and close members of the families. Their distress has been heightened by the recent uncertainty surrounding the case. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have made our concern abundantly clear to the Nigerian authorities on numerous occasions and at the highest level.

Most recently, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made that clear when he saw the Nigerian acting high commissioner in London on 24 January. There has been intense diplomatic effort in London and Lagos to secure progress in the case. I know that the Nigerian authorities are also aware of the level of public anxiety about the matter, not least from the letters of relatives and friends, which the Nigerian acting high commissioner has told us he has received.

I fully understand and sympathise with the feelings of the two families and nothing that I can say today will alter the anguish and frustration that inevitably results from such prolonged and enforced separation. I want them to know, however—perhaps the hon. Member for Gordon will pass this on—that the Government will continue to do all that we can to see that the case is brought to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion and that in the meantime the conditions in which the two men are held are the best that we can achieve.

As the hon. Gentleman recognised, we now have a firm date—19 March—for the commencement of the trial. This was confirmed to our high commission in Lagos on 12 February after representations had been made to a senior judge in the Ikeja judicial division to which the case was transferred in January. The high commission also obtained confirmation that the men would face two charges—conspiracy to steal an aircraft, and stealing the aircraft.

Clearly, it is not for us to comment directly on the charges themselves any more than we should expect any other Government to question proceedings in our courts. Conscious as I am of the anguish of the men's wives and children, however, I sincerely hope that the trial will result in a speedy and fair end to this most unfortunate episode. I repeat that the Government will do all that we can to achieve that end.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of what he described as political pressure and specifically a possible link with the request for the extradition of Mr. Dikko from this country. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that there is no evidence to suggest that the delays in this case are in any way linked with recent developments concerning Mr. Dikko's status in the United Kingdom or the trial of his abductors, and I entirely agree that any such link would be utterly unacceptable to the Government and people of this country. I am sure that the Nigerian authorities realise and accept that.

I believe that the delays in this case are the result of the pace at which the judicial system moves rather than anything more sinister. In all fairness, we must concede that we have similar problems in the United Kingdom at times. The conduct of the forthcoming trial will, I hope, vindicate that opinion. An official from our high commission will, of course, be in court to observe the proceedings.

As the hon. Gentleman said, this case has a somewhat unusual history. The two men were arrested on 19 May 1984 and eventually brought to court on 23 November on a charge of conspiracy to steal an aircraft. Five court appearances followed, at the last of which, on 18 January, the prosecution withdrew the charges and the men were released, only to be rearrested as they left the court. That development naturally caused great concern and representations were made at once to the Attorney-General's office in Lagos, but I am informed that such a development, although uncommon, is not in conflict with Nigerian law. As I have said, the date for the new trial has now been set and we must await the outcome.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has maintained close contact throughout the period with the two men's families, with their company, Bristow Helicopters, and with the hon. Member for Gordon. I greatly appreciate the hon. Gentleman's tribute to our consular officials in Lagos. As he knows, the consular section of our high commission in Lagos has provided regular visits to Mr. Clarke and Mr. Paterson and has been very active in trying to ensure that in all the circumstances they have been detained in as good conditions as possible.

It is true that the men were transferred to Kirri Kirri prison in Lagos on 15 February from a more favourable regime and that detention at Kirri Kirri was authorised under decree No. 2. The high commission has obtained an assurance from the Attorney-General that the men's trial will in any case proceed as planned, on 19 March, and we have no reason to believe that that will not resolve matters once and for all.

I am informed that the men are physically well and that their morale is as high as can be expected. A high commission officer was able to visit them on 20 February and again yesterday, 26 February. We have also been able to obtain today authority for regular visits every Tuesday and Friday by a representative of the high commission and the engineers' lawyers.

The hon. Gentleman touched on our trade relations with Nigeria and questioned the relationship between those trade relations and the position of these two men. Our trade relations are close, but I would not for one moment say that we are favouring those relations in any sense at the expense of these two men or at the expense of our determination to do all that we can to see that their trial is brought forward as speedily as possible.

Britain's relations with Nigeria, a respected and senior fellow member of the Commonwealth family of nations, are long-standing and deep. The links, not least in our legal traditions and the sense of justice and fair play which unite our two countries, remain as strong and vigorous as ever. We will do everything possible to maintain and foster that close relationship.

It is important that the Nigerian authorities should be well aware of the concern of people in this country about the Bristow engineers, and this debate will serve to underline that concern.

As so often, much of our effort must, if it is to be successful, take place out of the public gaze, but I hope that what I have said tonight will reassure the hon. Gentleman that the Government have done and are doing everything they can to ensure that this unhappy matter is now brought to the speediest possible conclusion.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): My hon. Friend referred to the position of Mr. Dikko. Does he consider

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

that this might be a good opportunity for him to say whether a request has been received from Nigeria for his extradition and, if so, what the response will be?

Mr. Renton: It would not be appropriate for me to go into that on this occasion. We are very concerned about the position of these two men and this debate is about them. If my hon. Friend will write or speak to me about the position of Mr. Dikko, I will gladly communicate with him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Order. As all the private Bills have blocking motions, I shall, with the leave of the House, deal with them in a single group.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

HARROGATE STRAY BILL *(By Order*

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL *(By Order)*

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

STREATHAM PARK CEMETERY BILL *(By Order)*

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 7 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Terrorism (Media Coverage)

3. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider introducing legislation enabling him to ban media coverage of terrorist activities; and if he will seek the co-operation of other countries in similarly preventing terrorists gaining media coverage for their aims and opinions.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): No, Sir. Section 4 of the Broadcasting Act 1981 requires the IBA to ensure that its programmes include nothing which is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder, or to be offensive to public feeling. The BBC accepts the same obligations under its 1981 licence and agreement with the Home Secretary. Within this framework it is a long-standing principle in this country that the broadcasting authorities and the press should have full editorial responsibility for the content of what they broadcast or publish.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not precisely what terrorist organisations require when they commit such outrages that, immediately they do so, the media tell the nation that those organisations committed them? Is it not surprising and even ludicruos that in the Republic of Ireland, which has tried to cut the publicity given to IRA extremism by not allowing any comment on television, viewers can simply switch to British channels and discover precisely what is going on and which organisation is alleged to have committed the offence?

Mr. Shaw: I understand my hon. Friend's point. As to the first part of his question, the Government and the broadcasting authorities accept that the latter are appointed as trustees of the public interest in broadcasting and that they must carry a large measure of responsibility for what they do. As to the second part of his question, my hon. Friend will be aware that in the Republic of Ireland there has been a long tradition of media censorship in one form or another, which I am sure he would agree would be unacceptable in this country.

Mr. Janner: Although I accept fully what the Minister said about editorial responsibility, is he nevertheless aware of the enormous ill-will that exists in India as a result of the coverage of the murder of Mrs. Gandhi, and especially the coverage of the views of those who support the organisation which was apparently responsible for the murder? Will he consult his Foreign Office colleagues and the Attorney-General to see whether the law can be strengthened so as to deal with what may be incitement but what is at present impossible to prove as such?

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks, and I am aware of the sort of programme to which he refers. This is very much a matter for the broadcasting authorities rather than for the Government. However, I should make this observation: what is broadcast in the United Kingdom may be perfectly acceptable here, but if others seek to use it elsewhere, it may have different effects.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Although I accept the good intentions of the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander), does the Minister agree that it is dangerous to treat the symptoms of the disease rather than the cause, and that we must achieve political settlements of those issues to prevent terrorism in the first place?

Mr. Shaw: That goes extremely wide of the question, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: May I ask my hon. Friend, who was a Northern Ireland Minister, whether, without resorting to censorship, there should not be consultations between the two Governments and the broadcasting authorities to see whether they can keep in step in any action to counter what Dr. Garret FitzGerald has called the "common enemy"?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that discussions on all sorts of issues between the Governments of the Republic and of the United Kingdom have combined effects. My hon. Friend's question seeks to change the remit for public service and all other broadcasting in the United Kingdom, and I believe that we should take care before we do that.

Coal Industry Dispute

4. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many official complaints about police behaviour have been received during the miners' strike; and how many of these concern accusations of assault.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): I understand that from 13 March 1984 to 26 February 1985, 549 complaints were made against the police in connection with policing the current dispute and 111 were withdrawn; 256 contained allegations of assault by police officers.

Information on completed investigations of those complaints and their outcome is not yet available centrally. I understand that the Police Complaints Board's annual report for 1984 will contain some statistics on cases which reached it in that year and on which action has been completed.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Home Secretary confirm that as charges of unlawful assembly made by the police against Yorkshire miners have been dropped, no further use will be made of that archaic and discredited law against miners and their supporters?

Mr. Brittan: I give no such confirmation. The fact that in a particular case a matter is not proceeded with, proves nothing about the importance and usefulness of that offence in other circumstances.

Mr. Mates: Among many wild allegations made during the miners strike are some that the police have been tapping trade unionists' telephones. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that we know that he cannot confirm or deny individual cases, but is there some way in which he can try to allay those suspicions and lay to rest the allegations generally?

Mr. Brittan: I am aware of the allegations that were made in a television programme which was not ultimately broadcast. The conduct of authorised interception is subject to continuing review by the monitor of interception arrangement, presently the distinguished Law Lord, Lord Bridge of Harwich. In the light of recent allegations, however, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked Lord Bridge to examine the relevant papers to determine whether authorisations since May 1979 have named the individuals in question and, if so, whether those authorisations have been sought and given in accordance with the procedures and criteria in the Birkett report of 1957 and the White Paper of April 1980. Lord Bridge's findings will be made public so far as that can be done without damage to national security. As the allegations made in the programme relate predominantly to the period before May 1979, my right hon. Friend is seeking the agreement of the former Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries involved that this review should, in addition, cover their periods of office as far as is necessary.

Mr. Barron: Were any of the 111 police complaints which were originally put down and subsequently withdrawn not proceeded with because of consultations with the Police Complaints Board similar to the consultations that I had, when I was told that I could not at that stage go ahead with any complaints about police action in South Yorkshire because of legal proceedings?

Mr. Brittan: As I understand it, the complaints were withdrawn voluntarily. A number continue. As I have said, it is anticipated that the board's annual report will give information in respect of complaints considered in 1984. The report will be published in early May.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the actions of the police are widely praised in South Derbyshire, where they have been assisting my constituents to go to work? Does he agree that the police have behaved throughout with dignity, restraint and good humour, even when drunken hooligans have been chucking bottles at them, as we saw on television at the weekend? Does he agree that if agitators turn up looking for trouble they are lucky to be living in this country, where they do not get what they deserve?

Mr. Brittan: With the welcome return to work of many more miners, it is as well to remember that those who preceded them and those who never stopped working were able to make that choice because of the steadfast resolve of the police to contain and defeat violence and intimidation by a relatively small number of striking miners.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the important inquiry that Lord Bridge is carrying out, and its clear relevance to the legislation which the Secretary of State proposes to put before the House next Wednesday, will he now withdraw that Bill until the House has Lord Bridge's report?

Mr. Brittan: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, not for me.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that almost every problem arising out of the policing of this dispute has arisen because of the union's failure to follow guidelines on picketing? Will he introduce legislation as early as possible to ensure that in future unions encouraging mass picketing bear the cost of policing?

Mr. Brittan: I agree that if the union had complied with its guidelines there would have been no policing or law and order problem, and that the large number of

policemen who have had to go on to the picket lines would not have had to do so. As to my hon. Friend's second point, the review of public order that is taking place will consider all aspects of public order, not only in relation to what has occurred in the miners' strike. I shall take account of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Home Secretary aware, arising from his earlier comments, that if the allegations that are made in the film "MI5's Official Secrets" are true, such activities are unacceptable in a democratic society? Is he further aware that the view must be that the kind of activities carried out by the special branch and security services, if the allegations are true, are subversive, and it is wrong that individuals such as the CND chairman and general secretary should be harassed in this way?

Mr. Brittan: I am not prepared to join the hon. Gentleman in that speculative examination, but it is right that interception and surveillance should follow the procedures and criteria, and the definition of subversion supplied by Lord Harris as long ago as 1975 has stood the test of time and is the right one. I have no wish to defend any interception or surveillance going outside that. I have no reason to believe that it occurred, but Lord Bridge will look into the matter.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the more positive aspects of this dispute has been the fact that the police have been able to maintain the rule of law, despite tremendous provocation, and this is why they have such wide respect and support from the great majority of the British public?

Mr. Brittan: I can agree to that without any reservation.

Mr. Kaufman: I thank the Home Secretary for giving me advance notice of the announcement that he made today about the inquiry by Lord Bridge. That announcement and the letter that the Prime Minister has sent to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition are unclear, and, in so far as they are clear, are inadequate and unsatisfactory. First, is he aware that it does not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] This is a major statement, and the Opposition have the right to respond to it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a statement. This is Question Time. I accept that the Home Secretary made a longish answer, and I am giving the right hon. Gentleman some scope.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the Home Secretary aware that the statement does not deal with the allegations of infiltration other than interception? Secondly, it does not deal with allegations of false classification of persons as being subversive. Thirdly, it does not deal with allegations that material obtained by MI5 has, against the principles of the Maxwell Fyfe directive, been used for party political purposes. Fourthly, it does not deal with unauthorised interception. [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Mr. Speaker, I say, as a point of order, that if the Home Secretary----

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that any point of order arises. There seem to be rather a lot of notes in front of the right hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will bear in mind that this is Question Time.

Mr. Kaufman: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall put one or two more questions to the Home Secretary —[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—because he has behaved improperly in making a major statement, in response to a planted supplementary question and the right of the Opposition must be protected in such circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I am here to protect the rights of Back Benchers at Question Time. It is unfair to treat what is, after all, an answer to a question as a statement. I said to the right hon. Gentleman that the Home Secretary had given a fairly long answer to the question. I have no idea whether it was planted. However, I ask him to put his questions briefly.

Mr. Kaufman: I shall do so, Mr. Speaker, but I put it to you that the Home Secretary has made a major statement about an important inquiry. Let me proceed with the question. I put it to the Home Secretary that Lord Bridge's inquiry seems to have terms of reference that are deliberately designed to produce the answer that the Government want and that it is now quite inappropriate to proceed with the Interception of Communications Bill until Lord Bridge has reported. Above all, the country will not tolerate a cover-up on this matter. It wants the truth and we insist on it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the point of order after questions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The point of order is on this question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Gentleman that I shall take the point of order afterwards, as is the usual practice.

Mr. Brittan: I shall leave aside the rhetoric of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I am sure that, on reflection, he will regret what he said and the imputations of it. I have no doubt that Lord Bridge will conduct his inquiry quickly, as his compass is comparatively narrow. The timing of the Interception of Communications Bill is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The right hon. Gentleman asked some important and legitimate questions. He is right. The inquiry is related to interception, which is the area covered by Lord Bridge as the monitor. With regard to false classification being subversive, that will come directly within Lord Bridge's inquiry, as he will cover interceptions contrary to the criteria. Party political views will also be covered. Unauthorised interception will be a matter for the criminal law under the Bill that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned. Previously, it has not for the most part been covered by the criminal law.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I have tabled Question No. 14 and the Home Secretary has answered it already.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman will sit down we might get there.

Civil Defence College (Newsletter)

5. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Civil Defence college, Easingwold, will issue a regular newsletter to local authorities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are aware of the importance of keeping local authorities and their emergency planning staff in touch with developments and are looking at how this might best be done. A newsletter is one of the possibilities under consideration.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: In his discussions, will my hon. Friend consider informing local authorities which waste ratepayers' money on frivolities such as nuclear-free zones that their first duty is to protect their inhabitants and that there are means of injuring people other than by nuclear weapons?

Mr. Shaw: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Relatively few local authorities have followed the GLC's lead in dealing slavishly with nuclear-free zones. We intend to carry through the recently issued regulations to ensure that all local authorities take their statutory duties seriously and implement them.

Mr. Pike: If information on civil defence is to be given out, will the Minister bear in mind that this morning the early warning system in my constituency and neighbouring authorities in North-East Lancashire went off and that nobody knew what it was meant to be and took no notice of it?

Mr. Shaw: I cannot think of a better reason for more active civil defence policies than obtain in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Neil Thorne: In any publication such as this, will my hon. Friend ensure that due weight is given to civil emergencies as well as to military ones, as civil defence has an important role to play? The more we can get that message over to the public, the better.

Mr. Shaw: I take my hon. Friend's point, but he will be aware that our prime purpose is to ensure that the preparations which local authorities are required to make by the 1983 regulations are made.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the Minister is intent on disseminating information from Easingwold, will he ask local authorities to go one stage further and make available by newsletter or any other means they think most appropriate their detailed plans to interested members of the public in their areas? There is everything to be gained from making it clear what civil defence arrangements there are in local authority areas.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman is right. Local authorities are required to make preparations and councils in those authorities should be in a position to get to know them and give them wide publicity.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Would such a newsletter not provide an admirable opportunity to end the Government's dishonest and hypocritical policy of pretending that there is some defence to a nuclear attack and to point out the consequences of a nuclear winter, which make irrelevant all planning for evacuation, relocation or shelter, and, more importantly, that, if we want to remove the threat of nuclear war, participation in peace negotiations is the most important and urgent task?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman's observation reveals a complete confusion which is frequently seen in the minds of Opposition Members. The Government are talking about civil defence preparation, which is a humanitarian and essential precaution to be undertaken whatever may be the threat.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend accept that many local authorities take their civil defence responsibilities seriously and that many of them—this is true in Norfolk—feel that they are not receiving the support on training that they should from the Government? Will my hon. Friend look again at the ways in which we can give the maximum support to those local authorities which are doing, or trying to do, a good job on civil defence?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that the very existence of Easingwold and its importance is for training. That establishment is the bedrock of the training system, but I shall do my best to ensure that more training facilities are made available.

Metropolitan Police

6. **Mr. Gould** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from individuals and organisations concerning the proposed reorganisation of the management structure of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Brittan: I have received representations about various aspects of the reorganisation from six organisations and from a number of hon. Members.

Mr. Gould: Why were the consultative committees not consulted about the matter before the decision was taken in principle? Is there not a danger that the reorganisation, although aimed at decentralisation, will mean in some boroughs, although perhaps not in my own, that the consultative committees will find it more difficult to liaise with the police authorities at local level?

Mr. Brittan: It is reasonable for the Commissioner to make arrangements about the internal organisation and management of the force in consultation with the police authority, but I agree that continued effective consultation arrangements are of great importance, and it is on those matters that there will be discussions with borough and district councils, community-police consultative groups and representatives of local communities about the arrangements in each area. I hope that they will lead to an arrangement that is satisfactory for all concerned.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that probably the best way to improve the management structure of the Metropolitan police would be for it to have an officer class, in the same way as the armed forces, specifically trained and recruited for that purpose?

Mr. Britain: I do not myself feel that that would be the most constructive way forward, but I understand the concerns reflected by my hon. Friend.

Immigration

7. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the countries from which there is pressure to emigrate to the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): There is pressure to emigrate to the United Kingdom from a number of parts of the world. Social, economic and political circumstances change and therefore the countries from where there is pressure to emigrate change over time. For example, from some parts of the Indian subcontinent there has been and is continuing

pressure. Elsewhere, pressure fluctuates according to circumstances in the country concerned, such as political or social unrest.

Mr. Bidwell: Notwithstanding those facts of life, which I accept, will the Minister now state unequivocally that the long-standing British principles of the rights of families to come together where the breadwinner is, and the rights of male and female to join each other without discrimination in marriage, are not impaired? Will he undertake to overhaul the present immigration rules as they apply to those principles to ensure that they are adequate to meet the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, because many people, including the Commission on Racial Equality, do not think that they are?

Mr. Waddington: Of course, men who are settled here have the right to have their wives and children join them, but those who apply for entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent must go through a process so that their claim to come here may be assessed. I have to say that some matters are overlooked. If a man chooses to come here on his own, we do not divide the family, and it must be recognised that half the people in the non-priority queue in Dacca at present are re-applicants. It would be stretching the imagination a bit to suppose that all those re-applicants are genuine in their claim, because it would mean that in every case the entry clearance officer and the appellate authorities were wrong as well. Therefore, those claims must be assessed, I am afraid, against a background of some fraud.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. and learned Friend accept, without mincing words, that every immigrant who comes to this country either takes up a job, which we cannot afford, or goes on the welfare state, which we cannot afford, and that the vast majority of people in this country welcome our firm but fair strict immigration control policy?

Mr. Waddington: I think that everybody in the House recognises that, obviously, we must have a firm but fair system of immigration control, and we cannot allow young people to come here and go straight on to the labour market at a time of high unemployment. I am sure that the vast majority of people in the House are as anxious as I am to see, for instance, that after we have tightened up on the work permit system, young men do not come here using marriage as a device. Unfortunately, it is plain that quite a number do.

Drugs

9. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the increase in the quantity of hard drugs seized by the police in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): Between 1979 and 1983 the quantity of heroin seized by the police increased by more than 12 times, and the amount of cocaine by two and a half times. The increase in the quantities of drugs seized by the police over the past five years, especially heroin, confirms the seriousness of the problem of drug misuse. The police are responding by giving increased priority to the investigation of drug and drug-related offences: the Government are equally determined to follow a firm and coherent strategy to tackle all aspects of drug misuse.

Mr. Raffan: As my hon. Friend says, while those figures are a great credit to the police, they reflect the serious increase in drug trafficking. When is the committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers, which is currently reviewing arrangements for drug operations, expected to report, and how regularly does that association hold a national drugs conference?

Mr. Mellor: The Association of Chief Police Officers holds a drugs conference every year. That is a most helpful innovation. The committee will report in due course, but I cannot say precisely when. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that considerable changes have been made by the police in their operations, to reflect the increasing involvement of major criminals in drug-related offences, and it is estimated that up to half the time of regional crime squads is now being spent in dealing with serious drug conspiracies.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the Minister aware that at my advice bureau last Saturday five different groups of people came to me complaining about teenagers taking heroin in their communities, and that the problem in Merseyside is growing, and reaching epidemic proportions? Is he further aware that, while we welcome the Government's campaign to inform parents about the problems of drug taking, the parents of Merseyside are already well informed? The *Liverpool Echo*, if nobody else, has told them in its campaign what the problems are. Is the Minister aware that the problem is that, having identifed the problem, parents have difficulty in getting their son or daughter to a rehabilitation unit or a hospital, because there are no places?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman seems to misunderstand the central problem of drug taking today, which is not that most people have reached the stage that they are so severely dependent on drugs that they need rehabilitation centres — although they are being established in increasing numbers up and down the country —but that they need advice, counselling and assistance. It is the purpose of the Government and the Merseyside regional health authority, working in collaboration with the local authorities, to provide this. That range of services is being developed, and I dare say that in his usual constructive way the hon. Gentleman is helping that process.

Mr. Greenway: When my hon. Friend talks of providing rehabilitation services, will he accept that there needs to be adequate servicing for heroin addicts 24 hours a day in suitable places throughout the country?

Mr. Mellor: It is plain that the Government are committed to developing a system of rehabilitation for hard drug addicts, and about £10 million has been produced in the past 12 months to facilitate that. It is also the case that the primary responsibility for providing health care services of this kind lies with the regional and district health authorities, and it is the purpose of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to ensure that that provision is made.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister accept that, while people are happy to see the increased police success, the increased publicity and the increased amount of money

for health funding, the missing link is the increased investment in Customs officers, sufficient to make sure that we do not have drugs in the country in the first place? Not until the numbers of Customs officers are satisfactory will we get to grips with this severe problem.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is repeating the fallacy of his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). He should look at the figures. A further 160 Customs officers have been recruited specifically to deal with drugs matters this year. The number of specialist intelligence officers employed to deal with heroin in the Customs service has nearly doubled and success of the Customs in seizing nearly 300 kilos of heroin last year is good evidence of the considerable success that they are achieving.

Immigration

10. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Commission for Racial Equality to discuss its report on the administration of immigration control.

Mr. Waddington: The Commission has not asked for such a meeting, but if it were to do so I should be happy to meet it.

Mr. Bennett: Are the Government not appalled by the findings of the report, which make it clear that the administration of immigration control in the country is racist? What are the Government going to do about it?

Mr. Waddington: I am certainly appalled, because the report is disappointing and does not address itself to the real problems with which we are faced. It is absurd that the report should not face the fact that there is more pressure to emigrate from some countries than from others. To deny this flies in the face of common sense. It is inevitable that more people from some countries will try to enter Britain when not entitled to do so than from others. This will obviously be reflected in the failure rate.

Sir Dudley Smith: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that there are many genuine immigration cases but that there are also many others where duplicity is practised? Is he aware that many of us feel that the Home Office just about gets it right and, if anything, errs on the side of leniency?

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. I think that our entry clearance officers carry out a difficult job with great expertise. Although, obviously, one wants them to have the best training and one should be considering the quality of training all the time, I am disappointed that so much time is spent by the writers of the report in, for instance, criticising the entry clearance officers for noting in their files remarks which I freely concede are unprofessional but certainly do not warrant stringing up entry clearance officers by their thumbs and flogging them.

Vandalism

13. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current number of reported cases of vandalism compared with the previous 12-month reporting period and five years ago.

Mr. Mellor: In the 12 months to the end of Sept last year, the latest period for which figures are avai the police in England and Wales recorded 486,000 of criminal damage compared with 432,000 i preceding 12 months and 320,000 during 1979.

Mr. Freeman: While acknowledging that signi increase in vandalism, may I ask whether my hon. agrees that it is important to keep the first offender the criminal justice system, and is not one way of this to promote the use of juvenile liaison bureaux in authorities throughout the country? Will he favourably upon the development of one in constituency?

Mr. Mellor: I cannot comment on my hon. Fr last point, but I can assure him that it is part o purpose, wherever possible, to keep juveniles out criminal justice system. For instance, a proposa recently been published to ensure that cauti procedures are put on a similar footing throughou United Kingdom, and this will assist in the process th hon. Friend wishes to continue.

Communications (Monitoring)

14. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State f Home Department if he will make a statement rega his Department's assessment of security require involved in monitoring the communications of pr groups.

Mr. Brittan: I have made it clear on a numb occasions recently that peaceful political campaign seek changes in Government policy or to influence opinion generally does not fall within the very criteria under which the interception of communic may be authorised. Those criteria, and the asso procedures and safeguards, are set out in the White "The Interception of Communications in the U Kingdom", published on 7 February 1985, Cmnd.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Home Secretary aware that not believe what he has just had to say? Have his servants told him about the letter that I sent him rega Mr. and Mrs. Wallis of Old School House, Clopton Molesworth? They are both peace campaigners. C period of five days relatives and friends of theirs rang only to be answered by an answerphone. Subsequ those friends annd relatives found that the Wallis never had an answerphone in their home. In the Secretary's eyes their only so-called crime was tha were trying to get American missiles off British soil not a scandal that this dictatorial Government shou to such lengths to hound decent British people?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman is quite wro come to that conclusion. He knows very well that it the practice to comment on individual cases. I do n one moment accept the validity of his g observations. However, the Interception Communications Bill, which the House will shor debating, will provide safeguards which have never b existed and which certainly did not exist when the L Government were in power.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Is my right hon. and le Friend aware that if he is not watching these people, my money back?

Mr. Brittan: Without going, as is customary, any further into these details, I can only say that my hon. Friend should not expect a refund.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Was that not a disgraceful question — *[Interruption.]* — a perfectly disgraceful question? How can the Home Secretary justify tapping the phone of an assistant to the leader of the Labour party —*[Interruption.]* Oh yes. That is what that programme showed. It means that a file on that woman now remains within MI5's records. How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman justify the fact that a woman who is now a Labour Member has had her phone tapped? How can he justify the fact that the phone of a peace-loving representative of CND was tapped? How can all those instances of phone tapping be justified by the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and by senior Conservative Government officials when the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows perfectly well that every one of them was an intrusion into the civil rights of ordinary citizens? Why does he not come to the House and make a statement instead of hiding behind a question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)?

Mr. Brittan: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the allegations made in the television programme, to which reference has been made, he will know perfectly well from what I have already said that they will be looked at by Lord Bridge, the judicial monitor, who will report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman will also know perfectly well that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reiterated the statement that has been repeatedly made that there is no telephone interception of Members of Parliament, and that if such telephone interception were to become necessary or desirable, a statement would be made to the House before it was done.

Mr. Aitken: Earlier this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend made quite lengthy references to the television programme that has so far not been seen by viewers, but which sparked off many of the allegations concerning the alleged monitoring of pressure groups. As we have now had lengthy parliamentary exchanges, a screening of the programme in Parliament, and a statement this afternoon from my right hon. and learned Friend, would it not be fair and in the public interest to instruct the Independent Broadcasting Authority to take off its suppressing devices and let the public see for themselves what all the fuss is about?

Mr. Brittan: The IBA came to its decision on the basis of the legal advice that it obtained. It has a duty to comply with the law. However, its decision is entirely its affair.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Home Secretary say whether the reports in today's edition of *The Times*, which tell us that the Government have decided not to prosecute Miss Cathy Massiter because the matters that she revealed were too secret to come before a court, are true? Is that an indication that if an individual wants to leak, he or she should leak very secret things?

Mr. Brittan: The decision is for the Director of Public Prosecutions under the superintendence of the Attorney-General, and not for the Government. No decision has yet been made.

Mr. Maclennan: I recognise that the Leader of the House is responsible for the management of the Government's business, but will the Home Secretary acknowledge, bearing in mind his admission in answering the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that Lord Bridge's report would be produced very soon, the inappropriateness of bringing forward the telephone tapping Bill next Wednesday?

Mr. Brittan: No, I cannot make any such acknowledgement. Parliamentary business is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend tell the teachers that, however deeply they may or may not feel, a strike would be damaging not only to our children's education and to the respect in which teachers are held in the classroom, but to the status of teachers in society, and for that very reason their eventual remuneration?

The Prime Minister: As I have said previously, we deplore the pursuit of a pay claim at the expense of the education of children. However strongly some teachers may feel, we do not think that anything can justify that action.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that by driving the teachers to this desperate measure in the same way as they did with the miners, the Government—by not paying enough money towards teachers' salaries—are the root cause of any curbing of children's education? The teachers want to continue teaching and to do their best. It is the Government's refusal to give teachers decent wages and conditions that is harming our children. Responsibility lies with the Government and not the teachers.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to hear that I do not agree with him. Teachers' pay has kept pace with inflation since 1979.

Mr. John Browne: During my right hon. Friend's recent visit to the United States, did she note the enormous contribution to economic growth, new jobs, new technology and new revenues that has been generated by new and smaller businesses? Despite the valiant efforts of her Administration in Britain, does she not feel that planning and employment legislation still act to stifle new and smaller businesses? Will she please light a rocket to explode these shackles?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that new jobs will come from new businesses and small businesses. That is where the vast majority of the 7 million new jobs in the United States over the past two years have come from. We are considering regulations with a view to diminishing their effect or repealing those which might prevent new businesses from starting up.

Mr. Steel: Notwithstanding the action that the Prime Minister is taking following the Channel 4 programme, may I ask her not to close her mind to the setting up of a

permanent committee of Privy Councillors to oversee the security services and to deal with complaints about possible abuses from members of the public?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. That proposal has been put forward many times before and I do not think it a very useful one. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that since April 1980 the processes of interception have been subject to independent monitoring by senior members of the judiciary — first, Lord Diplock and, secondly, Lord Bridge of Harwich. They have been able to assure me in every one of their annual reports that they have satisfied themselves that warrants for interception have been applied for and issued in accordance with the procedures and criteria described in the White Paper on interception of communications, which was presented to the House in April 1980.

Q2. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. Friend agree, now that the majority of miners are working, with 61 coal faces, £120 million worth of equipment, £700 million of miners' pay and many jobs unnecessarily but permanently lost, that it can all be put down to one man and that the biggest enemy of the coal industry and coal miners is Arthur Scargill?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the strike has been highly damaging to the coal industry and to those whose future rests in that industry. It has lost customers and confidence, and the best way forward is for miners who are still on strike to take matters into their own hands and return to rebuild the industry which their leadership has shattered.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has the Prime Minister seen today's report of the Select Committee on Social Services, which says that any fool can close a long-stay hospital, but that it takes time and trouble to do it properly? Does she agree that the cruellest fool of all is the one who does that sort of thing while saying that the National Health Service is safe in her hands?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is a well-known procedure for the closure of hospitals. He will also be aware that the Labour party when in government closed more hospitals than we have closed, and that sometimes they are closed so that there may be better provision in newer hospitals. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that under this Government the increase in expenditure on the NHS has reached 20 per cent. in real terms, after inflation has been taken into account.

Q3. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the relative strength of the pound against the European currencies, especially as we are an oil producer, presents an ideal opportunity, in relation to the pound against the dollar, for us to be more competitive in our exports and therefore to do our GDP a power of good?

The Prime Minister: One of the advantages o strength of the dollar is that exporters have more ch to get more exports into the United States. Those who never tackled that market before have a good opport to start to establish a position there, and then to ke should the relative exchange values change.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister noted concern expressed today by her friends on the Tre and Civil Service Select Committee at the Governm policy, as they put it, of making the gas, electricity, and other industries pay off debt and finance all f investment from current charges? How can she defe policy that guarantees large and unnecessary increas water, gas and electricity bills, both for ordinary fan and for industries that are striving to compete?

The Prime Minister: After last year's drough thought it right to make increased investment in the industry. In fact, a 9 per cent. increase in investme being made in that industry; and if we have incre investment, it must be paid for. The right hon. Gentl has a nerve to complain about electricity prices, be in mind that under the Labour Government they we 2 per cent. every six weeks, whereas under Government they have gone up by only 2 per cent. i years.

Mr. Kinnock: That is all very well, but again the hon. Lady does not answer the question. Is she not a that the policy she is operating means either subst price increases so as to get investment, or lower increases, with a consequent decline and deca investment, with all the results of that on nat economic prospects? Which does she want — h prices so that we have some investment, or more s prices so that we get economic decline?

The Prime Minister: Is the right hon. Gentl suggesting that there can be increased investment wi someone paying for it? If so, he is being absol ridiculous.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady used the ins of water in the Thames Valley. She will have to ex her theories to the chairman of that authority, appo by her, who said that he could get higher investmen efficiency with a 3 per cent. increase. She forced a cent. increase on him. Is that what she mean efficiency?

The Prime Minister: We have to look at the supp water all over the country as a whole. Does he not?

Q4. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Prime Minister whethe will list her official engagements for Thursda February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend t reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fallon: Has my right hon. Friend had tim study the report in *The Guardian* that the Commission has discovered that social services fo elderly could be improved by 20 per cent. withou increase in resources? Have not local authorities a d seek such savings?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I noted the report o Audit Commission. It is very good evidence to suppo view that we have been taking for some time that in

of concentrating on increasing expenditure we should be concentrating on getting more services for the present expenditure. That is what the Audit Commission says can be done in the social services departments.

Mr. Wigley: On the question of water costs, is the Prime Minister aware that the Welsh water authority has said that the cost of water would come down in real terms in the coming year but that, as a result of her Government's action, the cost will increase by a third of 30 per cent. over the next three years? Will she now admit that the costs that people are facing are a direct result of this Government's policy?

The Prime Minister: We took a decision to increase, over the country as a whole, investment in water, reservoirs, pipes and everything else. I should have thought that that was in line with what I have often been urged to do—put extra resources into infrastructure. It was also necessary because of the drought. May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that, on average, water rates are about 20p a day. That is about the cost of a daily newspaper.

York

Q5. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to York.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Gregory: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the York electors will be saddened that the Prime Minister has not yet found time, with her very busy diary, to visit the medieval city of York? Nevertheless, when she does have that opportunity, I am sure that she will deplore the loss of rail revenue through the coal dispute and say that, as the Government have put a greater amount of money into rail investment in the last five years in real terms than any previous Government, the quickest way to continue a successful transport policy is to ensure that coal freight is returned to the railways from the roads.

The Prime Minister: I did indeed visit the excellent railway museum when I went to York, and very good I found it. I agree with my hon. Friend that the coal strike has damaged jobs in industries far beyond the coal industry itself. It has very much damaged the railwaymen's prospects of getting the freight they need and I fear that that will result in the loss of jobs by railwaymen because of the loss of coal freight.

Mr. Ewing: Does the Prime Minister realise that York played a very important part in the early history of the Post Office and that when a postman got tipped in York in the early days he did not have to pay income tax on it? How on earth does the Prime Minister now justify the decision to charge postmen income tax whether or not they receive tips? Does the Prime Minister tip her postman and, if she does, should the tip be taxed? If she does not, should tips be taxed?

The Prime Minister: The question of how and by how much tips are taxed is a matter for the Inland Revenue. It comes up from time to time in connection with any occupation in which tips are received, and the practice has not changed.

6. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Prime Minister take time today to look at some of her previous statements on the relationship of the pound to the dollar? For instance, does she recall saying on 6 April 1976 of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer when he rose to open his Budget

"last year the value of the pound was $2·37. When he rose to open it this year the value was down to $1·87 . . . That is the best barometer of the world's confidence in the"—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1976; Vol. 909, c. 284.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has said enough.

The Prime Minister: I think that I answered that question yesterday, and since then the pound has improved against the dollar.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that strikes by teachers every year are terribly damaging to children, especially those who do not have homes to go to during the day while the teachers are on strike, those preparing for examinations and all other children? Has not the time come for teachers to talk to employers to try to obtain an agreement that will last for two or three years so that schools are strike-free during that time?

The Prime Minister: An agreement that would last for two or three years would be very welcome. I agree with what my hon. Friend said about strike action. However strongly some teachers may feel, no strike action that damages children — especially those coming up to examination time — is justified. As my hon. Friend knows, teachers were offered arbitration but chose not to accept it.

Question Time (Procedure)

3.31 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, there is a great deal of pressure during Question Time. Today, the Home Secretary referred to the inquiry being carried out by Lord Bridge at the request of the Prime Minister. My point of order is simple and clear—[*Interruption.*] We know that Members on the Conservative Benches are not concerned with civil liberties. I am directing my point of order to you, Mr. Speaker.

The inquiry being conducted by Lord Bridge is obviously of a serious nature—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not prolong Question Time. That is a bad practice, which I thought we had ended.

Mr. Winnick: I consider that there should have been—

Mr. Speaker: Order. With great respect, it is not a matter of what the hon. Gentleman considers. He must put a point of order to me to answer.

Mr. Winnick: Was it not an abuse of the House that a matter of such importance should have been dealt with during Question Time, with no statements being made by the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to prolong Question Time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with one point at a time. I am not responsible for the questions that hon. Members table on the Order Paper for answer. There was a long answer to question No. 4, and we were able to reach question No. 14, which was broadly similar. I think that that was entirely due to the foresight and perspicacity of hon. Members concerned.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for an item raised during Question Time to be deemed by a Front Bench Opposition spokesman to be a statement and treated as such to prolong the questioning of the Treasury Front Bench?

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was given a copy—*[Interruption.]* He said so. He was given a copy of the answer. I think that he may have been under the misapprehension that it was actually a statement. That is what he said. That is probably how the misunderstanding arose.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), Mr. Speaker. I put it to you that, in your role of custodian of the proceedings of the House and the rights of Members of Parliament, an important matter is involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), in question No. 4, asked the Home Secretary

"how many official complaints about police behaviour have been received during the miners' strike; and how many of these concern accusations of assault."

The Home Secretary answered that question. Then, obviously by prearrangement—not with you, of course, as I would not allege that for a moment — the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) — and the Home Secretary was ready with his reply — asked a question which enabled the Home Secretary to give an answer which in no way related to the question put by my hon. Friend, but was instead used as an opportunity for the Home Secretary to make what in other circumstances would more properly have been a statement about the Prime Minister instituting an inquiry into allegations made in a television programme which was banned by the Independent Broadcasting Authority earlier this week.

The point that I put to you as a point of order is simply this: is it not an abuse of Question Time for the Home Secretary to use a question in no way related to the statement that he wanted to make so that he might make a statement in response to a planted supplementary question?

Mr. Speaker: May I say to the right hon. Gentleman and to the whole House that I have no knowledge of any planted question or anything of that kind. I called the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) because he happens to be Vice Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee. That is a very good reason. I had not anticipated that such a long answer would be given. I am not responsible for answers, but there used to be a system whereby, if we had questions of such complexity, they were answered at the end of Question Time. That would be a good way out for the future.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is recognised in most parts of the House, that you are very zealous in protecting the rights of Back-Bench Members, partic Question Time. How was it that a statement rel question still unasked, but described by the r Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufm statement, could be exchanged between membe two Front Benches but not circulated to any othe any other Member of the House? That seems abuse of procedure.

The Secretary of State for the Home De (Mr. Leon Brittan): Further to that point of orde to correct what has been said. I think the ri Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufn recall that he was good enough to thank me fo him a copy, not of any answer to a question, but that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister s Leader of the Opposition. He was not sent anyt related to what I answered.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I think it would be for the bene whole House that we should not prolong this an matter should now be finally cleared up.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to the point of order the Home Secretary, Mr. Speaker, I made it cle time, and I make clear now in response to th Secretary, that he sent me a copy of a letter w Prime Minister had sent to my right hon. Friend th of the Opposition. At the same time, it has to b you will appreciate what I mean, Mr. Speaker came as absolutely no surprise that the Home S then used the basis of that letter as an answ supplementary question. Furthermore, as I sai earlier point of order, no one was alleging in any you, Mr. Speaker, were a party to the plantin supplementary question. Nevertheless, it was ob everyone in the House that the right hon. and Gentleman was ready for the supplementary que may be that the position of the hon. Mem Hampshire, East made him confident that he w called by you to ask a supplementary.

Mr. Speaker: All that is as may be. The ri Gentleman, who has been in government, knows is as old as the hills.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): F that point or order, Mr. Speaker. In the earlier ex you said that you interpreted the Home Se response as an answer and not as a statement. O we all respect that interpretation and unders Although it was in the form of an answer, it was a prepared major statement of policy. Because th statement was put in a form which you accepted faith as an answer, I suggest that the Home S misled you and the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am in no way concern answers, nor is it my role to be interested in the though I may be.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The question asked by——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Membe he is now going to attempt to expand on Questi when he was, in fact, called to ask a question, I sh upon it very badly indeed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Two days ago, during Defence questions, I asked a question. Before the Minister could reply, you rose to your feet, Mr. Speaker, to point out that my question was not in order. The precedent is set for a judgment by you as to whether a parliamentary question is in order. I direct you to question No. 4 today, which was about police behaviour. The question was accepted by the Table Office and answered by the Minister. The hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) asked a supplementary question. I simply ask you to make a judgment and to rule whether the question asked by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East was in order in so far as it did not relate to police behaviour. [*Interruption.*] It was about surveillance. If the question was not in order, is it correct to say, in so far as the Minister made a statement in response to that question, that the Minister's reply was equally not in order? If you rule, following my point of order, Mr. Speaker that both the question and the answer were not in order, the House could require the Home Secretary to make a new statement on the question, thereby enabling many of my hon. Friends to raise questions.

Mr. Speaker: I interpreted the question of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East as being in order; otherwise I would have ruled him out of order. The House knows that I listen very carefully to questions. I am not responsible for what the Home Secretary says in his answers. I am sensitive to the moods of the House, and that is why—I hope the House understands this—we moved on fairly rapidly to arrive at the question again and to have a further exchange on it. In my view that was the right way in which to proceed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of points. There is the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about abusing Question Time. I well understand your predicament, Mr. Speaker. The Home Secretary was able to answer a question on a matter with which he wanted to deal. There is a long standing convention that a Minister answering a question is not expected to answer another question that is lower down on the Order Paper. That is the second abuse this afternoon by the Minister.

Because of the absence of some hon. Members, and because the House was able to race down the Order Paper, we reached question No. 14. I make two suggestions, Mr. Speaker. First, if you are going to pull up Back Benchers for straying from the subject, Ministers must be pulled up as well, secondly, you should ensure that you stop Ministers abusing the ability to answer questions lower down on the Order Paper when they are answering questions put by another hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member would make a very good Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that question 4 was my question. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply, I shall ask for an Adjournment debate on the subject.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must raise an entirely different point of order or I will not hear it.

Mr. Winnick: I am asking you whether in future—not today—you will make it clear to Ministers that when a matter is likely to be the subject of much controversy and a statement is clearly required, they should try to arrange that? What we had today was a serious abuse of Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to put me in a position of finding out what answers will be given.

Business of the House

3.45 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir.The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 4 MARCH—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the Government's expenditure plans, 1985-86, Cmnd. 9428.

TUESDAY 5 MARCH—Second Reading of the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

Consideration of the Water (Fluoridation) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation measure.

WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH — Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill.

THURSDAY 7 MARCH—Motions on the Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order and on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

FRIDAY 8 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 11 MARCH—Opposition Day (9th Allotted Day): Subject for debate to be announced.

Mr. Kinnock: I understand that this afternoon, in an entirely unsatisfactory way—indeed, one that abused the procedure of the House — the Home Secretary announced that Lord Bridge of Harwich will be asked to examine recent allegations about the interception of communications made in the "20:20 Vision" television programme for Channel 4. In view of that announcement, it would be completely inappropriate for the Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill to proceed before Lord Bridge has reported and his report is presented, as the Prime Minister has undertaken, to the House. Clearly this is a subject of immediate and immense controversy about which more facts must be discovered, and the Bill would benefit if its Second Reading was postponed until after we had heard from Lord Bridge.

In view of the Prime Minister's address to the United States Congress, in which she expressed her eagerness for British participation in the star wars research programme, will the Leader of the House ensure a debate on the so-called strategic defence initiative as quickly as possible, since it appears that Britain will be dragged into it willy nilly, at least before the next general election, after which we shall put a stop to all that nonsense—*[Interruption.]* Watch the polls.

The Leader of the House will have heard of the controversy about the amount of money which employers and teachers were apparently led to believe was available to pay teachers if they were willing to accept some structural changes in their profession. In view of the conflicting evidence that seems to exist, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make a full statement to the House next week, setting out the exact position of the Government and the discretion which they are prepared to allow to employers in the hope of making some progress in terminating the current dispute?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the importance which the right hon. Gentleman attaches to the Bridge inquiry—I am sure that the whole House believes it to be important —and to the desirability of his findings being available before the Second Reading of the Bill. We shall keep an eye on that matter through the usual channels.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the strategic defence initiative last week, and I commented then. I cannot helpfully add to what I said, except to say that I am sure that this will be a matter of lively political debate, as he promises.

I am certain that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made the Government's views on resources and restructuring clear. I know that there is a family interest in the matter, and I shall at once refer the point to my right hon. Friend and tell him that a statement has been requested.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): On Monday's debate on the Government's public expenditure White Paper, may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, as a result of a great deal of hard work by the Clerks and a miracle of production by the printers, has managed to produce a report on that White Paper which is relevant to the debate and which is now available in the Vote Office?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work to which my right hon. Friend refers, and, of course, the report will be made available for the debate on Monday.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Leader of the House recall that the Government have rigged the committees on the social security review and packed them with Conservative supporters? Many hon. Members wish to see the reports of those committees, but we now find that they are not to be published. Will the Leader of the House arrange for full publication of those reports?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that as we have plenty of legislation to keep us going there will be no harm in postponing the Interception of Communications Bill either until later in this Session or until next Session?

Mr. Biffen: As ever from my hon. Friend, that was a constructive suggestion.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Leader of the House will remember that at business questions last week my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition pressed for a debate on the report by the Commission for Racial Equality which has been criticised by the Minister of State, Home Office who took part in Home Office questions today? What news does the right hon. Gentleman have on that debate?

Mr. Biffen: The immediate news is that it does not feature in next week's business, but I shall continue to bear in mind what has been said.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of the importance of what was published in *The Times* today about an alleged new danger in fluoridation, does my right hon. Friend think that it would be sensible to

withdraw the Water (Fluoridation) Bill temporarily to allow a period for mature reflection to enable the DHSS to come up with the answer?

Mr. Biffen: I know that some of my hon. Friends are determined to make parliamentary history and I shall have to observe their efforts. I am sure that the report in *The Times* will feature in our discussions on Tuesday.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the proposals made on 17 December by the Prime Minister to remove 234,000 teenagers from receiving supplementary benefit and of the answer that the Prime Minister gave during Prime Minister's Question Time last week that the youth training scheme was a good scheme and useful for young people? In the light of that and of the fact that more than 5,000 unemployed teenagers are lobbying the House this afternoon, will he arrange for the Prime Minister to make a statement showing why, if YTS is such a good scheme, she feels the need for the industrial conscription of 500,000 youngsters by denying them the right to supplementary benefit?

Mr. Biffen: The best reply that I can give to the hon. Gentleman is that during Employment Question Time next Tuesday he will have the opportunity to take his arguments further.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): As my right hon. Friend is a former Secretary of State for Trade, will he consider carefully the possibility of a debate soon on whether the multi-fibre arrangement should be extended because many of my hon. Friends are far from happy at the tenor of Ministers' replies yesterday?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of the importance of the multi-fibre arrangement and I shall bear in mind the point that my hon. Friend makes. He will realise that there is always pressure on time available for debates, but he touches upon an important arrangement affecting an important industry.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On the Interception of Communications Bill, and in view of the developments over the past few days on the "20:20 Vision" programme, does the Leader of the House recognise that the subject of bugging is equally as important as that of telephone tapping but that it is not contained within the Bill's long title? Will he consider taking back the Bill to ensure that that aspect of interception is included, or at least acknowledge that it would be suitable to have a wide-ranging debate on Second Reading?

Mr. Biffen: It is not for me to anticipate the rulings of the Chair, but I think that the points that the hon. Gentleman seeks to make would probably be within the bounds of a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-west): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 396?

[That this House condemns the decision of the Inland Revenue to tax postmen on the assumption that they earn £150 yearly in tips when there is absolutely no evidence to support that assumption; and urges the Chancellor of the Exchequer to instruct the Inland Revenue to rescind that decision.]

Does he agree that it would be grossly unfair if postmen and milkmen were made to pay tax on their tips and gratuities? Will he ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a statement as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: This is an echo of the old argument that there used to be about Easter offerings. We are so near to the Budget and all that flows from it that my hon. Friend will probably be able to make his point then.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): In view of the report in *The Times* today that Ministers have said that they do not wish a prosecution to be brought under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act against Cathy Massiter, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on section 2, which seems to get in a deeper mess with every week that passes? Will he arrange for Ministers to make statements to the House about their comments on a matter that we were told only two weeks ago was entirely for the Law Officers? What has changed—is the whole Cabinet now back from holiday?

Mr. Biffen: That is a matter for the Law Officers. The hon. Gentleman will find that he will be able to make the first point during the Second Reading debate on the Interception of Communications Bill.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): In view of the fact that nearly 500,000 people are employed in the knitwear and textile industries in Britain and that their jobs are largely dependent upon the multi-fibre arrangement, which comes to an end next year, will my right hon. Friend look upon this matter with much more urgency? Will he arrange for an early debate so that we can come to a decision about the negotiations that are necessary for the continuation of the MFA?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend says. I know that he has a substantial constituency interest in the matter. I think that I gave a measured reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), and I should like to let the matter rest there.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): In view of the critical decisions taken by the National Theatre of Britain in terms of cutting down its activities because of the inadequacy of the Government grant, when will the House have an opportunity to discuss this important matter, not at the fag end of a tired day in an Adjournment Debate but in a full sitting of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I have no immediate plans, but I have a lively respect for the artistic lobby in the House. I have no doubt that it will find opportunities to ensure that the matter is debated.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): With regard to the Interception of Communications Bill which we are due to debate next week, was my right hon. Friend as surprised as I was to hear the business of the House announced on Radio 4 this morning? Will he make representations to the BBC to the effect that the House should hear its business first? May we shortly have a debate on the BBC and the licence fee?

Mr. Biffen: I agree profoundly with those sentiments. I am never surprised at the BBC.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): In view of the fact that the British information technology industry has recently been described by the National Economic Development Office as being in a serious crisis, and bearing in mind that the industry in the United Kingdom is slipping behind not only the Japanese and the Americans but the French and the Germans, will the

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

Leader of the House, with a sense of priority, find time to have a debate on this important matter, and in particular on the reports that have been produced by NEDO?

Mr. Biffen: Inasmuch as the hon. Gentleman"s political philosophy suggests to him that public expenditure is the means of promoting these industries, he could take advantage of Monday's debate.

Mr. Randall: No.

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry that what was meant to be a constructive suggestion should be cast aside. I can offer no early prospect of a debate on this industry in Government time, but as we are approaching the season of the Budget I am certain that the hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunities to make his points.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the United States Government will be spending about $26,000 million in the next five years on a strategic defence initiative. Many research contracts could be available to the United Kingdom. Is it not time to have a debate on this far-reaching research programme? Although I do not normally approve of what the Leader of the Opposition says, I think that there is a strong opinion in the House for such a debate.

Mr. Biffen: A coalition of my hon. Friend and the Leader of the Opposition is a formidable proposition which reminds me of what will be increasing pressure to have a debate on this subject, but there is no immediate provision for one.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): May I reinforce what others have said, that it would be intolerable to reach Wednesday and debate the Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill without having had a ministerial statement, if not Lord Bridge's report, beforehand? In view of the interdisciplinary nature of the Food and Environment Protection Bill, will the Leader of the House consider referring the Bill, after Second Reading, to a Special Standing Committee so that taking evidence from outside witnesses can be considered?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will have noted the tone of my reply to the Leader of the Opposition and I hope that he will have been encouraged by it. I do not think that the Food and Environment Protection Bill would be appropriate for the Special Standing Committee route, not least because it has already received considerable consideration in another place before coming here.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the wisdom of curtailing Foreign Office questions to 3.10 pm on Wednesdays, as the great majority of the House would much rather that European questions be merged back with Foreign Affairs questions?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says and believe that he echoes a widely held view. There is now virtual agreement on the matter and I hope that changes can take place quite soon.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of a document entitled "Sleeping out in London" which says that conditions in hostels for homeless people are so bad because of lice, danger of physical and sexual assault and bad hygiene conditions that many people prefer to sleep in the streets? Is he also further aware that the Government's proposals for cutting supplementary benefit for those living in bed-and-breakfast hostels has received an unprecedented 520 submissions to the Social Services Advisory Committee? In view of the growing public and political anxiety about the plight of the homeless, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate in Government time on this subject?

Mr. Biffen: I have no plans for such a debate next week and I do not travel that hopefully for a debate in the medium future. As the matter concerns the budget of the DHSS, the hon. Gentleman might well make his arguments on Monday.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is greatly admired on this side of the House for his support of just and fair issues? Would he care to earn even more of our esteem by providing an early opportunity for a debate on alternatives to the present iniquitous system of rating?

Mr. Biffen: This course has been run so many times that the hoof marks are embedded. My hon. Friend might like to bear in mind Question Time on Wednesday when the Department of the Environment could be exposed to his scepticism on these affairs.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 421 concerning the campaign of the Transport and General Workers Union on low pay, which has been signed by more than 90 hon. Members?

[That this House notes that the European Social Charter considers 68 per cent. of average earnings to be fair remuneration for men and women to be able to enjoy a decent standard of living; notes that Her Majesty's Government have completely failed to take any appropriate measures to alleviate low pay but have, in the interests of market-place ideology, withdrawn a number of legal safety nets for the low paid, and are now threatening wages councils; notes that the Government have also introduced schemes, such as the young workers scheme, to drive down low wages even further; notes also that the Government concentrates its attack on the wages of the low paid, in a determination to reduce our poorest workers to absolute poverty or the dole queue, while allowing the highest paid in the land to enjoy greater and greater increases and top-hat fringe benefits without restriction; and calls upon the Government to abandon the politics of the workhouse and sweatshop and take urgent measures to ensure that every full-time worker enjoys a living wage of at least £100 per week, in line with the Transport and General Workers Union's Living Wage Campaign.]

May we have an early debate on this important subject or at least a statement from the Secretary of State for Employment?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a lively and contentious issue. I shall draw his request for a statement to the attention of my right Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. Friend having any success in the aim to reduce

the amount of business which is still coming before the House next week and, as far as we can see, will come before us for many weeks which, I am told, is inclined to exhaust Ministers and to make other hon. Members somewhat restive?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that that is not a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): The Leader of the House represents all Members, and many right hon. and hon. Members from all parties are indebted to Westminster hospital for health services. Is the Leader of the House aware that, on 11 March, the regional health authority will have to make a decision about stopping cardiac surgery at Westminster hospital? Because that decision is so imminent, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement so that we may question whether closure is in the best interests of people with heart problems?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly comply with that request.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As we are to have a debate on public expenditure on Monday, and as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said earlier this week that if we surrender control over the public purse we surrender our sovereignty, could my right hon. Friend have produced for hon. Members a short and intelligible document setting out how the European Community is entitled to funds from the United Kingdom and how it can supplement those funds and what authorisation the House would require to let the Community have those extra funds? I am sure that my right hon. Friend would not wish the sovereignty of this House to be surrendered through ignorance or sleight of hand.

Mr. Biffen: Being asked to provide anything short or intelligible on the finances of the European Community is a challenging proposition. Nevertheless, I shall refer my hon. Friend's request to the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and we shall have to see what happens.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman seriously reconsider taking the Interception of Communications Bill on Wednesday, not least because of what happened in the Chamber earlier today? Nothing less than a statement from the Home Secretary was curiously drafted into a question on the policing of the miners' dispute. The right hon. Gentleman told my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that he is prepared to keep his eye on the matter. That is precisely why we should like the Bill's Second Reading to be delayed—we want to find out from the inquiry whose eye is on what.

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I think that I had better leave my reply as it was in response to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Following the announcement in *The Times* on Monday that the House is sitting later and more regularly, what suggestions is my right hon. Friend putting forward, knowing that he is arranging for an inquiry?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that my hon. Friend should be too gullible when he reads *The Times*.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not the Leader of the House abusing our procedures in suggesting how we should use proceedings on the Interception of Communications Bill? Can he not see that there is a distinction between the Bill and its consideration and dealing with the allegations made on a television programme? Is he aware that it is impossible for hon. Members to take an objective view on phone tapping before the Bridge report has been presented to the House? Why does he not reconsider? It is not fair to the House for him to say that he will leave his answer at what he said to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition? He must give us the answer. Parliament requires that its questions be responded to fully.

Mr. Biffen: I am simply not prepared to go any further with the hon. Gentleman than I went with the Leader of the Opposition. I think that that is a reasonable sense of priorities.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Has my right hon. Friend noted that no fewer than 100 hon. Members have expressed their support for early-day motion 326 on the reform of student unions?

[That this House, recognising that all students are currently compelled to join a students' union and that since the majority of such unions are affiliated to the National Union of Students most students are in practice compelled to belong to two closed shops, and noting that students' unions and the National Union of Students consume some £40 million of taxpayers' money, calls upon the Government to take steps to give individual students a free choice as to whether to belong to student organisations and while continuing to give financial support to the provision of sporting and recreational facilities to prohibit the use of taxpayers' money for political purposes, including the payment of affiliation fees to the National Union of Students.]

Is he further aware that some interesting and encouraging amendments have been tabled by Opposition Members? Does he agree that this provides an excellent basis for debating conscript membership of student unions and the abuse of taxpayers' money used for political purposes by those unions? Will he arrange for an early debate on these matters?

Mr. Biffen: Alas, I must disappoint my hon. Friend, as I do not think that I am able to arrange for a debate in Government time, but this is the type of lively debate which might well distinguish private Members' time.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House accept responsibility for two matters? First, we are told that no prosecutions will take place arising from the television film, but there has been no statement from the Attorney-General. Secondly, why was no statement made by the Prime Minister today on the inquiry to be carried out by Lord Bridge? Is the Leader of the House aware that, on those two matters, there has been a serious abuse of the House of Commons for which he should take due responsibility? Although those matters may not give rise to genuine points of order that we can raise with Mr. Speaker, they concern us deeply, and, presumably, the right hon. Gentleman has some responsibility for them.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, and I am sensitive to the interest that there is in the Interception of Communications Bill. The decision of the Attorney-General on the "20:20 Vision" programme is entirely a matter for him and I have no

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comment on that. Information was made available today by the Home Secretary. The Leader of the Opposition has made representations to me about the desirability of having the Bridge report before Second Reading, and I responded to that in, I thought, a forthcoming fashion.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the United States budget deficit is not only massive in scale but largely out of control with more than half being unmonitored by the American congress? While the size of the budget deficit is not directly the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government, it has a massive impact upon our economy and currency. May we have a proper debate on that?

Mr. Biffen: We are coming to the Budget with everything that happens thereafter, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will have plenty of opportunities to contribute to those economic debates.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will my right hon. Friend explain the logic of Tuesday's business? In the first part the House will be asked to approve a sensible measure which seeks to control the amount of poisons being foisted upon the people of this nation, and yet after 10 o'clock we shall be asked to support, or the Government are trying to persuade us to support, a measure which seeks to foist a poison on the people of this nation. Will my right hon. Friend accept that, if one takes away from the Division lists of this past week the right hon. and hon. Members who have supported that measure and notes that they are either on the payroll or seeking to get on the payroll, there is no support whatever for that measure in the free vote of free men in the House of Commons?

Mr. Biffen: Whatever the raw arithmetic, there is a qualitative difference between the two divisions.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has now seen fit to extend his original list of 30 selected drugs to about 100? Will the House have an opportunity to debate that list and the thinking behind it before it is introduced on 1 April?

Mr. Biffen: It is my understanding that these proposals will eventually be contained in regulations which must be confirmed by the House.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made on Government policy towards the future level of profits and investment in the important pharmaceutical industry?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly draw that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend who is a sponsoring Minister of the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): How many days has my right hon. Friend set aside in future for the passage of the Water (Fluoridation) Bill?

Mr. Biffen: We are still taking bets on that issue.

Agriculture Council

4.13 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting in Brussels on 25 to 27 February. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed to certain modifications to the milk supplementary levy regulations in order to ensure the implementation of quotas throughout the Community in 1984-85. Two of these are particularly important to our industry.

The first is a provision enabling producers who have two quotas, one wholesale and one for direct sale, to switch between the types of quota according to the marketing needs of their businesses.

In order to avoid abuse, there will be strict administrative controls. This is a change for which I have been pressing at successive meetings and I am delighted that we have now obtained an agreement.

The second important element for milk is a provision, for one year only, to permit unused quota to be switched between producers and between regions. Provided there is no abrupt change in levels of milk production, I would expect this to relieve all liability for levy on wholesale milk sales in the United Kingdom in 1984-85. This is of particular benefit to Northern Ireland. We would also expect liability for levy on direct sales to be substantially reduced, though it is not possible at this stage to say whether it would be eliminated.

The package did not deal with a number of points which are of particular importance to some other member states, including the Irish request for an additional 58,000 tonnes of quota. This issue will be further discussed in the price fixing. It was made clear that subsequent decisions on this or other matters were in no way prejudiced by the decisions taken at this Council. I emphasised that we remain opposed to the Irish request.

I am also pleased to announce that the Council agreed on a series of important measures to bring wine production under control. These implement the outline agreement reached by the European Council in Dublin last December.

The new measures contain three main elements. The first element is an effective guarantee threshold so that surplus production will be removed by compulsory distillation at low prices, so as to dissuade producers from increasing output.

The second element is a system of aids for producers who grub up their vineyards and go out of production, thus leading to a permanent reduction of the Community's vineyard area.

The third element is a commitment to a restrictive price policy for as long as a significant structural surplus remains. This is a crucial part of the agreement and was one of the Government's major objectives.

During negotiations I was successful in reducing substantially the cost of the package to the Community without undermining its effectiveness. The Commission's original proposals would have cost over the next five years 740 million ecu—about £460 million. But this has now been reduced to 435 million ecu—about £270 million.

Our calculations show that these decisions will lead to significant savings for the Community budget by way of reduced distillation costs.

The agreement of the Council will be put into legal form as soon as the European Parliament has given its opinion on a small element of the package, which has only been recently proposed by the Commission, to restructure some Greek vineyards. We made it clear that this element is still subject to scrutiny in this House.

The Council also carried forward discussion on the more general agricultural structures regulations. The Commission formally proposed a new article authorising member states to introduce aids in environmentally sensitive areas. As the House knows, I have been pressing for such a provision. I am glad to say that it had a wide measure of support in the Council. I would expect discussion on the structures package to be resumed at the next Agriculture and Finance Councils, when I hope it will be possible to reach final decisions.

The Council adopted a regulation which allows the Commission to acknowledge applications submitted to it for aids for improvement in processing and marketing facilities. Without a prior acknowledgement from the Commission, work in hand is rendered ineligible for aid. This technical change was, therefore, needed in order to allow people to press ahead with investments. It is an important change for many British firms which wish to make improvements urgently.

Finally, I raised the question of the preferential tariff for supplies of gas to the Dutch horticulture industry. The Commissioner told the Council that the Dutch Government have now been informed that this tariff is incompatible with the Community's state aid rules. The Dutch have one month to respond to the Commission's communication. I emphasised that the Dutch growers had already benefited from reduced heating costs for most of the current season. I said that this was a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation and that the growers should be required to repay the aid. The Commissioner said that he would be giving further thought to this in the light of the Dutch response.

This was a highly satisfactory Council for the United Kingdom. The wine decisions are the second major step, after milk, to bringing reality into the common agricultural policy. The modifications of the milk regime are of great importance, as is the proposal on conservation. The Council has cleared the way to press ahead with the price-fixing negotiations.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I repeat the welcome that we gave to the changes to the milk quota scheme when they were debated in draft in the House last week. They are welcome because they will make the scheme a little less rigid than it was. Particularly welcome is the reprieve given to direct sellers through greater flexibility. Several of them were faced with possible heavy penalties, and that reprieve must rid them of considerable anxieties. However, the direct seller sector is only one of the major sectors that are seriously affected by the milk quota scheme. As the Minister will know, what we call the development cases face greater hardship. Therefore, is there any hope that a future Agriculture Council can be induced to do something to help them?

Secondly, I should like to ask the Minister about the proposal for redistributing unused quota to other parts of the United Kingdom. As he said, the present agreement extends only for this year. However, the *Financial Times*, reporting the Council's proceedings this morning, said:

"pressure is growing from several member states to make it permanent."

How realistic is that report? Is the United Kingdom one of the countries which are pressing for a permanent scheme? Again, I rely on the newspaper accounts for this matter. Will the Minister give us an account of the general review of the milk quota scheme, bearing in mind the tale of insuperable difficulties in Italy in implementing the scheme? When will we see the scheme actually working everywhere rather than just in the United Kingdom, as it is at the moment?

We also welcome the measures on wine, but the details are a little less certain than they were. They are somewhat complicated by the fact that Italy is one of the countries that is most affected. From the reports that we read in the newspapers, we see that there is a slight difference between what is reported and what the Minister said today. I should be grateful if he would clarify whether the grant is given for people who grub up their vineyards or for those who forgo replacing their vines with new vines. There is a world of difference. It is a dangerous concept to pay farmers for not doing something. At the back of our minds all of us are thinking of the number of phantom vineyards that will be spawned if the grant is to be paid for not doing something. I understand that the exact amount of money involved in the grubbing-up, or non-planting, scheme has not yet been decided, and will not be decided until the end of the year. I hope that the Minister will resist any substantial expenditure upon such an activity.

Most importantly on that aspect, I must ask the right hon. Gentleman what will be done with the surplus wine. I understand that most of it, after distillation, is going into storage. The Minister will know that the United Kingdom is the major manufacturer of industrial ethyl alcohol in the EEC, with about 50 per cent. of the production, and major chemical plants at Baglan bay and Grangemouth are dependent upon it. As I understand the situation — perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will clarify it — the use of such surplus distilled wine as industrial alcohol would be uneconomic without the introduction of a heavy subsidy to assist sales. I hope that the Minister will undertake clearly to the House that he will not consent to a scheme for such subsidies, which would undermine production and employment in this country.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned some progress on the environmental input to the structures agreement. Will he refresh the House's memory, because it is such a long-running serial? For how long has the structures agreement been on the agenda for the ministerial meeting? Is the right hon. Gentleman's confidence that it might be dealt with finally next time realistic, or are we to have a continuation of the serial?

I should like to ask when our hard-pressed growers are to be relieved of the unfair competition of the Dutch gas subsidy. What the right hon. Gentleman said, welcome though it is, promises that the subsidy will creep on from month to month, and month by month it is severely afflicting the horticulturists in our industry who have to put up with that. It is not good enough for the Commissioner to say that he will give further thought to it in the light of the Dutch response, because that will mean it being at least

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three months from today before any penalties are imposed. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that it will happen much earlier?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman asked many questions, and I shall do my best to answer them. I am grateful for what he said about the changes that we have been able to make in the milk arrangements. His comments were particularly helpful.

Milk producers who have applied for an expansion of their quota have virtually all been dealt with by the panels and the tribunal. I hope that the decisions of the tribunal will be transmitted within the next few weeks. As soon as we know where we are with the total amount that has been awarded by the tribunal, we can move much more quickly towards the finalisation of secondary quotas. We want to get on with that.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the permanence of the regional exchanges that I mentioned. That is clearly for this year alone. The Commission has made that absolutely clear, and we were prepared to accept it for this year, but no further at this stage.

The hon. Gentleman said that the milk quotas were working only in the United Kingdom. With respect, that is not true. With the principal exception of Italy, where the Commission has taken legal proceedings, milk production is moving towards the quota levels. That is happening in virtually all the other member states. Therefore, it is not fair to say that the quotas are working only in this country.

With regard to wine, the hon. Gentleman referred to ensuring that those who grub up their vineyards stay out of production. I remind him of the words that I used. I referred to a system for

"producers who grub up their vineyards and go out of production, thus leading to a permanent reduction of the Community's vineyard area."

I think that that answers that question. That point is taken on board. We must make sure that the acreage does not just come back through the back door.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the use of surplus wine and its compulsory distillation into alcohol. I assure him that on many occasions in the Council we have raised the problems that can arise because of the impact on firms such as British Petroleum of that sort of industrial alcohol. We keep a close eye on that matter and on several occasions we have drawn the difficulties to the attention of the Commission, and we shall continue to do so.

The hon. Gentleman asked me for how long the environmental point had been discussed. I think I am right in saying that I first raised it in the summer. I began by having no friends whatsoever on the conservation arrangements. To the best of my memory, the structures regulations have been discussed for about 18 months, but our environmental initiative has been much more recent. I am glad that we have gone from having no friends to having the support of the Commission, which proposed those regulations.

The hon. Gentleman asked the question about Dutch gas that I have been asking at every meeting of the Council since that anomaly arose, the question being, "When will relief come?" I have been pressing the Commission, and will continue to do so, so that what I regard as an illegal subsidy is ended as soon as possible.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his persistence and first-class effort in these matters. Will he bear in mind that what he has done will be particularly welcomed in the south-west of England by the producer-retailers of Cornish and Devonshire cream, which is so important for our tourist industry? Surely my right hon. Friend will agree that it is far better to get rid of dairy products by consumption rather than by storage. Having achieved that great result, will he now move on to the next problem, which, of course, is the sale or leasing of quotas and a further extension of the outgoers scheme?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generous remarks. I have had very much in mind the special problems of the south-west and the cream trade, about which over the last 20 years he has told us so much, and its importance, which I support.

On the question of leasing and sale, as my hon. Friend will know, we have been consulting the industry about how we should proceed to achieve greater flexibility in milk production—whether we should go for leasing or for the sale and purchase of quotas. We have considered it our first priority to deal with the question of mixed businesses, and we shall now be able to give more attention to the question of flexibility. I have had recent discussions with the National Farmers Union on this subject. I have explained to the House in the past that I have a good deal of sympathy for the prospect of leasing to create the greater flexibility that we need, and I hope to be able to make an announcement soon.

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): May I take this opportunity to add my congratulations to the Minister on the outcome of the negotiations, which, without doubt, will be of great assistance to the dairy farmers in Northern Ireland.

May I also take the opportunity to remind him that, while we welcome the improvements, in many ways they have come too late for those producers who kept within the law as it was and did not produce extra milk during the year. Such producers will now be seriously disadvantaged.

I ask the Minister to make it clear that this is not the end of the quota system, as many farmers may assume that Brussels will never collect the money. I ask him to do this so that we will not be in the position next year that we were in this year. I ask him to emphasise that point.

I also remind the Minister of the great difficulty that arises in Northern Ireland because of the lack of uptake of the outgoers scheme, and I ask him to bear that in mind. That problem has still to be overcome and solved in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his earlier remarks.

I understand that it would have been more helpful if we could have negotiated this change many months ago. The hon. Gentleman will know that I began pressing for the change last June, since when I have pressed for it at every meeting of the Council. Although I would have preferred it earlier, I am glad that it has come before the end of the year.

As to the outgoers scheme, I know that this has been going slowly in Northern Ireland. It has been re-opened. I hope that any farmers who are contemplating leaving the industry will take advantage of the scheme, which is very generous.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I add my warm congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his outstanding success over milk quotas. May he have equal success with the sheepmeat regime and the beef premium.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that his remarkable progress on conservation is much appreciated by those with conservationist interests in the countryside and by farmers who are equally keen that the countryside should remain as pleasant and as beautiful a place as it is already?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend on two counts; first for his earlier remark and, secondly, for his reference to what he called our remarkable progress on conservation. I find that my colleagues in the Council of Ministers are becoming more and more conscious of their responsibilities in the matter of conservation, and we shall keep up the pressure.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the Minister answer a simple question? Is he saying that he has agreed on a system of extra wine distillation without agreeing on a system for its disposal? How will it be disposed of, will there be a subsidy, and will there be an affect on the British chemical industry? Will he give an assurance that he will not agree to a step-by-step extension of the common agricultural policy into this part of industry?

Mr. Jopling: As to the alcohol which is produced by compulsory distillation, the current cost of the wine surplus has been running at about 1 million ecus a year, or approximately £600 million. This is the absurd situation from which I believe we must now move away. We are spending a great deal of money to reduce the acreage of vineyards and to ensure simultaneously that the surplus is taken off the market at the low price at which it is uneconomic to produce.

A great deal of the alcohol which comes from this distillation goes into store. As I said to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), we have been vigilant in ensuring that this does not distort the market, and we have been defending the interests of such firms as British Petroleum for a long time.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): May I add my congratulations to those of my other hon. Friends, and, indeed, other hon. Gentlemen, to my right hon. Friend on the successful conclusion of his visit.

Does my right hon. Friend recall the performance of the Dutch who, in recent years, have repeatedly been about to give up unfair subsidies and practices, as we have been told by successive predecessors of my right hon. Friend? The fact is that they continue to act outside the law. I ask my right hon. Friend to follow up the Dutch question with his usual energy. I congratulate him again on what he has secured abroad.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend is generous. I can give him the assurance that I shall not miss any opportunity to press the Commission to deal with the illegal actions of the Dutch Government until they are finally stopped.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I wish to raise two points. Can the Minister say whether the agreement on the wine lake has any effect on the fledgling wine-producing industry in this country and, indeed, in my constituency? Can he confirm that it is still the Government's intention to deny milk farmers in my part of the country and, indeed, in the rest of the country, the full quota allocated to them under the development system of inquiry?

Mr. Jopling: The agreements that we made have no effect on English wine. An exemption from obligatory distillation was secured for English wine.

With regard to the milk situation, my difficulty is that I cannot produce milk quotas which I do not have. I suppose that it might have been possible for me to fulfil all the awards of the panels and tribunal if, for instance, I had taken from all milk producers more than the extra 2·5 per cent.—say 3 per cent. I have to balance one against the other. If I had had the milk available to give to the developers, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, it would have meant everybody else having that much lower quota.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): May I add my congratulations to those of my right hon. and hon. Friends, which will have made my right hon. Friend aware that the persistence with which he has pursued these problems will earn him the warm recognition of the industry, which, in my view, he is serving well.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that overall fairness is still considered to be of great importance in the industry? Is he happy that the rules that he has negotiated in the change between wholesale quota and retail quota are capable of being properly enforced, especially in France? Secondly, will he remain aware that the Irish question continues to be regarded with great suspicion by producers in the United Kingdom, and will he make certain that Irish farmers do not pull a quickie?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend in his generous remarks asks about the enforcement of the arrangements that I described concerning mixed businesses. As I explained in my statement, there are some administrative provisions to ensure that abuses do not occur.

There was a good deal of disquiet about the possibility of a large amount of milk being transferred from direct to wholesale quota—the opposite of what we want. In Italy there was a suggestion of approximately 1 million tonnes. That suggestion was specifically excluded from the arrangement. I hope that we shall not see abuses on that account.

With regard to the Irish claim for a greater milk quota, in my explanation to the House I made my position very clear.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): May I refer the right hon. Gentleman back to the measures designed to deal with the wine lake and reinforce what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said? The production of industrial alcohol in south Wales represents a considerable means of employment. Will the Minister give the House an absolute guarantee that there will be no subsidy that will cause difficulties for the producers of industrial alcohol in Britain, and particularly those in south Wales?

Mr. Jopling: I am very conscious of the danger, and we have been very much aware of it for a long time. The whole purpose of these provisions is to reduce the amount of surplus wine and thus to reduce the amount of alcohol that is compulsorily distilled from it, which is in danger of distorting the market. We have been trying to bring wine production closer to the level of consumption, so that such distortion is much less of a danger.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): My right hon. Friend's announcement will be warmly welcomed by the

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dairy farmers of Dorset, and he is to be congratulated upon it, but is he aware that producer-retailers represent the one sector of dairy farmers who have increased the amount of product sold? Will my right hon. Friend now turn his attention to the problems of those dairy farmers who have provisionally been allocated secondary quotas, and who find on appeal that those allocations have been reduced?

Mr. Jopling: In the discussions that we had not long ago on the Bill to arrange the outgoers scheme, I told the House that it would be necessary to have cuts in the awards of the panels and of the tribunal. I said that I thought the figure might be about 35 per cent.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): With regard to the Irish bid for additional quota, did the right hon. Gentleman make it absolutely clear that if any additional quota was going, there was a very strong case for it going to help those farmers who are suffering in Britain, and particularly in Wales? In that context, given the mechanisms that exist in the EEC and which could be used to help producers, did the Minister make any application for additional assistance for milk producers in the less-favoured areas?

Mr. Jopling: With regard to the Irish proposal, I have continually made it clear to other Ministers and to the Commission that we would be opposed to that suggestion, and that if there is to be extra milk for anyone, we are just as anxious to suggest candidates as, I imagine, are all the other Ministers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is not this very costly scheme to give additional subsidies to farmers to grub up vineyards in order to get rid of wine lakes very similar in character to the Common Market scheme of some years ago, which paid people millions of pounds for killing cows in order to get rid of the milk lake, which has, of course, grown enormously since then? Is the Minister at all confident that the scheme will be fairly applied by the Italian and French Governments, given that the Italian Government already pay substantial sums of Common Market money to the Mafia for non-existent vineyards and for the destruction of non-existent tomatoes?

Mr. Jopling: There is provision to set up a register of vineyards throughout the Community, and that will go a long way towards solving the problem. Steps have been taken to deal with any dangers of imaginary vineyards. The assistance given to people to grub up their vineyards includes a provision to ensure that they do not come back into wine production.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): With regard to the proposed new article allowing the payment of aid in environmentally sensitive areas, will the Minister confirm that it is to increase and not to reduce farmers' incomes in those areas? I welcome his gradual conversion to the policy of the Social Democrats in allowing greater flexibility on quotas by trading them.

Mr. Jopling: One of the first things that I said when I came out from the final negotiations on the milk quotas was that they were much too inflexible and that sooner or later we would have to work in a system of flexibility. The hon. Gentleman asked about the environmental arrangements. I hope that we shall be able to get final agreement on that matter within the course of the next Council, and that we shall then be able to continue our progress so that extra assistance can be given to farmers in certain sensit areas to encourage them to continue with traditio systems of farming.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Although I recogn the great achievement in reducing the amount of surp wine, I am concerned, as one involved in the chemi industry—as I think my right hon. Friend knows—t the vast wine lake may one day be unloaded on the mar in the form of distilled alcohol, thus greatly disturbing of our most successful industries. As one who is a concerned with health, may I say that if I had to give advice to my right hon. Friend, I would say that it better to advise people to drink more wine and less crea

Mr. Jopling: From what I hear about some of the ta wine that goes for compulsory distillation, I would rat my hon. Friend had to drink it, and not me. I hope he understand that the prime purpose of the negotiations is reduce the surplus wine so that less distillation then has take place, and so that there is less of this alcohol arou which is extremely expensive to dispose of.

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Although I do wish to tarnish the Minister's halo today, will he recogn that there are at least 10 other areas affecting the da industry that badly need his attention before that indus can even get on the first rung of the ladder to recover

Mr. Jopling: When it comes to helping the da industry back to recovery after the imposition of m quotas, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recall particularly as he comes from an area that has many sm producers—that one of the principal purposes of outgoers scheme is to return the small milk producer t level of quota that is the same as his level of product in 1983, before quotas ever came into being.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right h Friend accept the congratulations of my constituents Stafford who had certain difficulties about the milk quo during the by-election? He has achieved considera success in the recent negotiations. In practical terms, h will policing measures be pursued in the Europe Commission to ensure that the level of production—example, in France—has fallen as far as it should ha done? I believe that at present the French have manag to reduce production by only about 1·3 per cent., when the figure for Britain is about 8·9 per cent. What practi administrative measures are being taken to ensure that French fall into line with the rest of the Community?

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to distinguished weekly news sheet, *Agra Europe*, wh shows in its current edition that there has been a very la reduction in milk production in France during the p month. I think that it is true to say that the Commiss is becoming more and more expert in policing regulatio and that the weapon of disallowance is being used mu more frequently. Although there is still a long way to we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I am sure that not o the farmers but the taxpayers will welcome my right h Friend's statement. He has informed us that the scheme administer the dairy surpluses will lead to a reduction £200 million. Is it not interesting that his statem coincides with the report published in one of our da

newspapers that dairy farmers' margins for concentrates have increased by 18 per cent. since the introduction of quotas?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I am glad that the dip in the sales of dairy concentrates which took place in the months following the introduction of milk quotas is now reduced and that the level of production is moving back towards previous levels.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, South): I, too, offer my congratulations to the Minister and his colleagues on the successful way in which the negotiations have been concluded. However, I ask him to move forward and consider how the provision of quotas can be made available to young entrants to dairying who wish to make dairy farming their career.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I was conscious from the start of the milk quota regime that the inflexibility would cause difficulties and problems for young men trying to enter dairy farming. That was the main reason for my urging that we should introduce greater flexibility. I intend to press the Commission and the Council to give more attention to this problem now that the problem of inflexibility between direct and wholesale quotas is out of the way.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I add my personal congratulations to my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues on the splendid deal that they have pulled off in Brussels on wholesale and retail quotas. I assure my right hon. Friend that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends will, in their own inimitable way, help him all that they can to reduce the European wine lake. I ask him to redouble the strenuous efforts that he is making to bring some relief to tenant farmers. Will he consider making tenant quotas a tenant right?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend has been extremely kind in his remarks. The problem of landlord and tenant goes with the desire to make the transfer of quotas more flexible. Tenant rights and compensation are very much involved. Many legislative problems accompany any move that might be contemplated into the deeper grounds of tenant rights and arbitration. However, these are options that we have very much in mind for the future and we are discussing them with the farmers' unions.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Anglesey and Wales will welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, because it proves that my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues are doughty fighters who are capable of winning on behalf of our farmers. If there is insufficient quota to meet the requirements of farmers who engaged in considerable industrial expansion to produce more milk in the past, will he consider whether there are any other ways in which he can help those who have made considerable capital investment? When we debated this issue last year, my right hon. Friend was good enough to say in response to my intervention that he would reconsider the matter if there was insufficient quota to meet these requirements.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend has said kind words about the arrangements which we were able to negotiate. I am prepared always to consider what can be done to help those who are in particular difficulties over milk quotas, and the work of the panels and the tribunal is one way of doing this. My hon. Friend will know that the injection of further Government funds behind his worthy aim is a much more difficult problem.

Mr. John: I return to the issue of industrial ethyl alcohol. The right hon. Gentleman's answers will cause real anxiety to those who are employed in the industry. I ask him to confirm two points which I put to him originally and which he overlooked, no doubt because of the number of questions I asked. Will he confirm that, without a subsidy, the industrial alcohol that is distilled from the wine surplus will not be competitive with industrial ethyl alcohol manufactured in Britain? Secondly, will he confirm that he will not give his consent to money being made available from EEC funds to subsidise the use of wine alcohol in this way?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has heard what I have said about this. Distillation is an extremely expensive way of dealing with surplus wine production. It means that, at heavy cost, we obtain alcohol that is distilled from wine. In the past, huge sums of public money have gone into this process. As I told the House a short time ago, the cost of the surplus is running at about £600 million. The product of that sum is industrial alcohol that has been distilled from wine.

We are seeking to reduce the amount of wine that is produced. Therefore, there will be fewer hectolitres of wine which need to go to compulsory distillation. Less alcohol will be produced and there will be less danger of the market being distorted. I can produce chapter and verse to support my claim that we have been raising this matter almost endlessly since I became the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and I believe that it was being raised before my appointment. Every effort has been made to try to ensure that anomolies do not occur and that British firms, such as British Petroleum, are not put at a special disadvantage.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber at the beginning of the Minister's statement. However, I am prepared to trade off a question now for a shorter speech from him in the Welsh debate.

Mr. Howells: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to ask a question of the Minister. I shall be brief in the Welsh debate as well. What plans does the Minister have to help dairy farmers who bought their farms in 1983 and who find life difficult as they do not have a quota that will keep them in business? They are in financial trouble. What specific plans does he have to help them?

Mr. Jopling: It is extremely difficult to do anything for those with no quota who were not producing milk when the scheme began on 1 April 1984, other than to have their cases considered sympathetically and carefully by the panels and the tribunal. The hearings of those bodies have now finished and I hope that their decisions will be transmitted within the next few weeks to all farmers who believe that they have a grievance under the rules of the arrangements. I am not able to go beyond that.

Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974

4.57 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the adverse effect of the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act on community relationships on Merseyside."

This request to adjourn the House is not a sign that I support violence or terrorism. I do not believe that the Prevention of Terrorism Act helps to prevent terrorism. Indeed, I believe that it is counter-productive and causes us to play into the hands of the IRA.

The issue is specific because it relates to statements made in a broadcast on Radio City — which is Merseyside's local radio station—by three Irishmen who were detained under the Act, two of whom, after seven days in custody, were released without charge. One of the three, James McCormack, was fined £150 for giving false information to the police. He said that his name was Jimmy Young. He was drunk in Liverpool on Christmas eve and as he was Irish as well he was arrested under the Act.

The issue is specific because all three men make serious allegations about how they were treated while in custody. These allegations include being kept in a cell with a large light shining on them all the time, being released in driving rain wearing only socks, having their houses raided by detectives who found nothing, being made to wear only paper overalls in freezing cold, being fiercely and unfairly interrogated and threatened, and being subjected to many other acts designed to cause degradation. These three men were held without evidence. Two of them were never charged and surely they were innocent until proven guilty.

The issue is urgent because of the effect that the Act is having on Merseyside. Once again, sectarian conflict is, regrettably, occurring on the streets where previously Catholics and Protestants of Irish descent have lived in harmony. If a debate were allowed on this issue, I could speak passionately as one brought up a Protestant who represents probably one of the most Catholic of constituencies. The matter is urgent because the Act's implementation is seen to be anti-Irish and anti-Catholic. Merseyside holds the record for the number of people detained under the Act since 1974. I understand that on Merseyside 1,354 have been detained and only one has been charged under the Act.

This is an urgent and serious matter, as the House should hold dear our civil liberties. We are opposed to the people of violence because such people would destroy our liberties. But the very liberties that we wish to safeguard are now being destroyed by the Act.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the adverse effect of the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act on community relations on Merseyside."

I have listened with interest and care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House. However, I think that he will find other ways of raising the matter.

Open University

5.1 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-
beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the
under Standing Order No. 10, for the purp
discussing a specific and important matter that shou
urgent consideration, namely,

"the reaction of the Secretary of State for Education and
to the report of the Visiting Committee of the Open Uni

The matter is specific in that the Open Univers
set up by Act of Parliament and does not have a
NAB to act as an intermediary. The long-awaite
which was published yesterday, coming, as it doe
seven years of real-term losses in funding, gave th
University a glowing bill of health and expressed t
that the Government would be prepared to sta
confidence in the university and in its continuing
as to help dispel the concern that is being felt
institution, and to encourage it to look to the futu

It is an important matter because, despite a posit
enthusiastic assessment, the Secretary of Sta
awarded a niggardly £100,000 out of a total provi
£50 million, though he has moved a cut—a sev
at that — from 1986 to 1987. The allocation
million for redundancies is money that should be s
education.

An urgent debate is necessary because if not
done to persuade the Secretary of State of the erro
ways, students will be lost, teachers will be dis
broadcasts will be cancelled, and, perhaps
importantly, the Open University's ability to
national needs will be destroyed.

The cuts are deeply and disproportionately dama
an institution with high fixed costs. An increase i
would enable a 20 per cent. increase in student enr
The present ungenerous award will mean not
diminution in student numbers but a substantial sla
face to a worthwhile, innovative and well-run ins
that should be enabled to plan ahead. I beg yo
Speaker, to grant Parliament the opportunity of
debate on this subject in the light of the report.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Cambridg
North-East (Mr. Freud) asks leave to mo
Adjournment of the House under Standing Order
for the purpose of discussing a specific and im
matter that he thinks should have urgent consid
namely,

"the Secretary of State's announcement of the grant f
1986, and 1987 for the Open University."

I regret to tell the hon. Member that I must give
same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Boo
Roberts). I do not consider that the matter that
raised is appropriate for discussion under Standin
No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his applicatio
House.

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill (Committee Proceedings)

5.4 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I received notification yesterday that I had been selected to serve on the Standing Committee dealing with the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. I was also notified yesterday that that Committee was to start its proceedings on Wednesday next.

You will understand, Mr. Speaker—I will not go into the merits of it—that that is a technical, complex, highly controversial and emotional Bill. It is imperative, therefore, that hon. Members who are to serve on that Committee have ample time in which to consult outside specialist bodies so as to frame intelligent amendments.

I gather that the procedure that has been followed in getting the Bill into Committee so early is entirely within the rules of order and that nothing untoward has been done either to bend or break the rules. I gather from information that I have received from the Public Bill Office that it is within your discretion, Mr. Speaker, to allocate Bills to particular Committees and that it is also within your discretion to change your mind.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that Back Benchers have the right to protection when a situation occurs in which we are not able to play a proper part in ventilating our views and the views of many members of the public on matters of critical importance. In this matter, it is abundantly clear that we shall not have time to frame amendments, still less to consult interested parties outside.

The matter is within your discretion, Mr. Speaker. I do not know how it could be done, but perhaps there is a way by which we could delay—for an indefinite period or for whatever the period might be—the initial meeting of the Committee to enable us to do the things that we want so much to do.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I, too, was notified yesterday that I was to serve on the Standing Committee. I was astounded when I saw that the Committee was to sit next week. I had no idea that that stage of the Bill would come forward so quickly. It is normally the procedure of the House that private Members' Bills go to Standing Committee C. From a reading of the Order Paper and the Vote, it was clear that a lot of business was before Standing Committee C and therefore I had not anticipated that I would be required to prepare myself within a week for this important Committee.

We are speaking of no ordinary Bill. It is no light measure and it is not an easy matter on which to speak. I made that point when I spoke on Second Reading. The speech that I made on that occasion took several days' preparation and involved a great deal of professional and scientific advice from outside the House. If I am to serve minority interests on the Committee — because the House gave an overwhelming decision in favour of the Bill, whereas I am against it — my arguments will depend on medical and scientific advice and I cannot be ready by next Wednesday. As one of the minority on the Committee, I shall be severely prejudiced.

When I pressed the Minister for Health in the House to bring forward his own measure, he pleaded that he could not do so in the time because of the great amount of research and study that would be required. He has every facility on which to draw — scientific advisers, chief medical officers and a host of scientists. The ordinary Back Bencher seeking to speak on the Bill—one of the most complex scientific and moral measures to come before the House for many years—must be at a great disadvantage when rushed in this way. I therefore appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to give consideration to the matter.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I plead with you to heed the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and the supporting comments of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch).

I suddenly find myself a member of the Standing Committee. Today, Thursday, one is expected to prepare oneself for the Committee proceedings next Wednesday. However experienced we may be as parliamentarians, this preparation requires a great deal of work. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central in his insistence that it requires an extraordinary amount of consultation with outside medical and scientific bodies. We cannot do all this between now and Wednesday. Surely, on a Bill which requires such careful scrutiny and has such awesome consequences, the minority on the Committee must have an opportunity of being sufficiently informed.

In asking you, Mr. Speaker, to use your good offices to see that the Bill is postponed for at least some weeks, we are asking you to protect the minority on the Committee, who will have a heavy burden and will need constantly to consult with people who, by their very nature, are not very easily accessible. It cannot be expected that doctors engaged in clinical practice and scientists distributed throughout the country can become immediately accessible to give advice and guidance to those of us who will certainly require them. I therefore trust that there can be a hiatus so that we can have an opportunity of putting forward considered, carefully drawn amendments which may help to shape the proposition, which at the moment a minority of us regard as one that would adversely affect the interests not only of the scientific community but of perhaps a million infertile people, who, as I well know from my correspondence, are deeply concerned about this Bill.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarvon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not one of those selected for the Committee although I am working in co-operation with hon. Members who have an interest in this Bill, as I believe you know. I too would like to support the points that have been made. I have been in contact with medical people involved in research on disability. I was given advice that led me to believe that there were at least a few weeks before this Bill would come to Committee and those medical people told me that it would the end of March or the beginning of April before they would be in a position to give a considered opinion on this matter.

In view of the short period between the publication of the Bill and Second Reading and the fact there have not been opportunities for medical people to make proper representations, and bearing in mind the small number of people opposed to the Bill on the Committee because of the balance of the vote on Second Reading, I press very strongly indeed that you take the points made this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened very carefully. I did have some foreknowledge that this was going to be raised. As the House well knows, it has been the practice for many years that an hon. Member—or a right hon. Member in this case—who has a Bill, can if he sees a slot in another Committee, transfer it from Committee C, which is the Committee that normally considers private Members' Bills. I have no authority to delay it.

The course for hon. Members who feel very strongly about it is to consult the Chairman of that Committee, because it is he who decides the day on which it will meet. The Chairman, as hon. Members probably know, is the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox). If they consult him, I am sure that he will listen carefully to their request.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the information and the guidance that you have just given to my hon. Friends. However, it might be for the convenience of the House, as the Leader of the House has just come in, if he could consider the representations that are being made, because it was quite unexpected that this private Member's Bill would be transferred from the normal private Members' Committee to what would normally be the Government's Committee, Committee D. Therefore the Leader does become involved in this process, and perhaps he could intervene on behalf of my hon. Friends and hon. Members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that it is anything to do with the right hon. Gentleman. This has been the practice for many years. The House well knows that I had some responsibility for this sort of thing some 10 years ago, and it has always been thus.

BILL PRESENTED

Working Conditions of Government Trainees

Mr. Dave Nellist, supported by Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. John Evans, Ms. Jo Richardson, and Mr. Dennis Canavan, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to health, safety and other working conditions of the trainees on Government training schemes; to make further provision with regard to conditions of employment and payment of such trainees and the responsibilities of the Manpower Services Commission to them; to regulate the terms of youth training schemes; and to establish the right to a job of trainees who complete the youth training scheme: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 March and to be printed. [Bill 95].

Welsh Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ni Edwards): The year since our last Welsh Day deb been overshadowed by the coal strike. The dispu brought suffering, hardship, violence and waste tha all the more tragic because of the unity and displayed by Welsh miners. That loyalty has been misused by Mr. Scargill. After seven rounds of nego had failed; after proposals from ACAS had been re and after Mr. Scargill had repeatedly boasted that not budged an inch, the TUC painstakingly prod formula that it thought offered a fair and reasonabl for a settlement. As *The Guardian* put it last Frid "it was an honourable and decent framework and the Executive tore it up".

We are confronted today, as we have been for a year, with the impossible demand that no pit sho closed on economic grounds. It is a demand that Labour Government would have regarded as an abs Yet we continue to be faced with a dispute that is coal faces, wasting resources, losing market damaging hundreds of other businesses. N economic growth has been less than it would oth have been; unemployment higher than it would have

The TUC has discovered as painfully as the res that it is impossible to negotiate with Mr. Scargill. is only one way now to end this tragic dispute and for the miners to end it themselves. They have th offer on the table since nationalisation; there prospect of new pits in south Wales; there is a bright for the industry if losses can be reduced and if the in is prepared to compete again on quality and price.

If the miners hesitate they could do no better look to the example of the steel industry. Its perfor has been remarkable. Despite the obstacles placed path, it has maintained production, held its marke and kept its customers' confidence at home and a The health of steel is a crucial element in determin future size and shape of the coal industry in Wale strike has proved very clearly that steel can and produced without Welsh coal, using imported necessary. It is not the steel industry that has damaged by the strike but the long-standing partn between coal, steel and rail. For the railwayn particular the strike has been a disaster. They ha business and jobs that I fear they will never recov

It was a privilege to be present at the annual din mark St. David's day at Llanwern a couple of week along with the chairman, management, trade unioni representatives of every section of the works, to with those who have operated the convoys and the w and the men who have controlled an immensely d operation to keep the great steelworks in full prod

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy understand that the right hon. Gentleman is now that the continual danger experienced by road including myself, on the M4 during the period strike, with the convoys that are such a dan motorists, should continue?

Mr. Edwards: What I am saying is that th industry will decide what is the most econom

sensible way of moving the raw materials it needs and that I think it likely that some of its materials that had previously been carried by rail may well continue to be carried by road in the future.

It is a particularly sad fact in the light of the efforts of the steel men that one consequence of the mining dispute has been to postpone investment decisions that affect the industry, particularly the decision about the highly important concast scheme for Llanwerne. But at Port Talbot very good progress is being made on the £171 million project for refurbishing the hot strip mill. It has been a tremendous feat by those at Port Talbot that has maintained very high levels of production, despite the inevitable disruption and despite the coal strike. At Shotton, BSC is working on a £25 million galvanising line that is expected to start production in 1986.

The positive reaction that we have seen in the steel plants and generally throughout manufacturing industries in Wales has been particularly important in view of the continuing very high level of unemployment, with 185,529 on the register. Particularly disturbing has been the increase in long-term unemployment, which causes the greatest social distress and is the firmest indication of this country's continuing inability to compete even in a situation of rising demand.

One of the more sobering sets of statistics that I have seen recently showed that in this country unit costs have risen by 5 per cent. or more over the last year during a period when they have fallen by 5 per cent. in Japan. If we cannot reduce the differential between high unit costs here and overseas, there is no possible course of action that Government can take to get unemployment down. Neither the policies of this Government nor any of the alternatives that are proposed can work if we fail to compete with other countries.

It cannot be a shortage of demand that is the cause of high unemployment. The demand is there. Output has been rising for nearly four years. It passed the 1979 peak in 1983; it went higher still last year and all the latest economic forecasts—including two this week—suggest that it will continue to rise substantially in 1985. That increase in demand, the sharp rise in company profits and last year's 13 per cent. increase in manufacturing investment are now creating a substantial number of additional jobs so that there are approaching half a million more people in employment in the United Kingdom than there were 18 months ago.

The good industrial relations we have in Wales and the determination of individual companies to lower costs and compete, especially at a time when export opportunities are so strong, is the best way of accelerating that process of new job creation. When David Jenkins, secretary of the Wales TUC, joined our inward investment team in Japan last autumn, he and I found one striking change from the response during my previous visit three and a half years earlier. Then, every Japanese industrialist expressed anxiety about British industrial relations. On this occasion, they went out of their way to tell us that they understood that the coal strike was wholly exceptional and that industrial relations and performance in their plants in Wales and in their suppliers' plants were first-class. That is why we shall see this year very substantial investment by Japanese companies in major new projects in Wales.

This investment will not just be Japanese. I think it likely that after two years of exceptionally high levels of capital investment by manufacturing companies, both foreign and British, the volume of manufacturing investment will be even greater in Wales in the year ahead. I am encouraged in that view by the number and scale of the projects notified to the Welsh Office. During 1984, 245 offers of regional selective assistance were made with a value of over £53 million, and nearly 18,000 jobs were associated with those offers. In 1984 we saw a doubling of the number of new industry projects and expansion schemes and all the indications are that in 1985 we will do better still. Since we established WINvest in April 1983 we have secured 46 entirely new projects by overseas companies involving capital expenditure in excess of £200 million with a promise of nearly 4,500 new jobs and in the same period we have had the announcement of 24 investment projects by overseas companies already operating in Wales involving capital expenditure worth over £100 million and more than 2,000 new jobs. In 1984 we successfully maintained our 1983 achievement in securing around 24 per cent. of new overseas projects and jobs coming to the United Kingdom. Taking new projects and expansions by overseas companies together, Wales has increased its share from 14·4 per cent. to 18·5 per cent. of the total number of United Kingdom jobs created. That is a magnificant record.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State referred to selective financial assistance. Does he accept that the rush of applications to the Welsh Office in recent months has been caused by the deadline for investment grants? Does he further accept that the areas that will receive selective financial assistance will not obtain the old-style investment grant and are in real danger of missing out when the rush comes to an end? Areas outside development areas, but which have similar industries based in them, will qualify for consideration for investment, which means that development areas will miss out.

Mr. Edwards: We are receiving a very large number of new applications, including applications from the areas that will be eligible only for selective assistance. New visits by those interested are running at a very high level. Interest in investment in Wales continues, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's fears are justified.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Is it not a fact that since 1 July 1975, 79 per cent. of all jobs associated with selective financial assistance applications that have been accepted have actually come under a Conservative Administration?

Mr. Edwards: It is undoubtedly a very high figure — I think, more than 70 per cent. The level of investment is rising substantially.

What is encouraging in the light of the present unemployment figures is that many of the largest projects that have been announced in recent years have only just begun to reach the point at which they start to make a significant impact in terms of jobs. For example, the buildings for Parrot at Cwmbran and Sharp at Wrexham, which between them will provide some 900 jobs, are now just at the point of occupation. The Invacare Bridgend project and Laura Ashley at Newtown and Wrexham, together providing more than 1,000 jobs, have not yet made an impact on the employment figures. At Newport, the work force at Inmos has been building up steadily at Dyffryn park, and we are looking for over 600 further jobs

[Mr. Edwards]

at the assembly and test facility at Coldra, now in an advanced stage of construction. In Clwyd, the Shotton paper mill project is on schedule and will start providing significant permanent employment in the months ahead. These are only a few examples of a large number of cases where investment already made is going to contribute to the number of people in work during the next 12 months.

The new investment requires new skills and it will be an increasing priority of Government to see that the expenditure on employment and training measures, which at present are costing more than £2 billion in the country as a whole, are used effectively to provide the training and skills that we need and as the means for ensuring that employers themselves provide training on the scale that is required. We have already announced a major expansion of training provision by the MSC. In Wales as a whole, the number of training opportunities to be made available through the MSC will increase by some 65 per cent. from just over 4,700 in 1984-85 to over 7,700 in 1985-86 and is expected to have almost doubled by 1986-87.

To achieve the maximum amount of the most effective training does involve a reorganisation of existing provision and a re-examination of skillcentre provision. But MSC's plans—far from reducing skillcentre training—envisage an overall increase by 1986-87 in the number of people trained in skillcentres in Wales. The MSC strategy has identified particular places, notably Llanelli and Pontllanfraith, where it believes scope may exist for better use of skillcentre provision and its replacement by other types of training. However, I emphasise that no final decision will be made about the future of any skillcentre, including those at Llanelli and Pontllanfraith, until I am satisfied that arrangements are in place that safeguard the quantity, quality and accessibility of training in the areas concerned.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I am grateful for those remarks. Can the Secretary of State confirm that my understanding is correct, that the decision to close the Llanelli skillcentre has not been taken and that, if the MSC review is favourable, that skillcentre will be kept open?

Mr. Edwards: It is correct that no final decision has been taken. The chairman of the MSC has used the same words that I have just used about the necessity to ensure that alternative arrangements will provide the necessary quantity, quality and accessibility of training before any decision is taken.

I referred to the role of local authorities, and I welcome the fact that Dyfed and South Glamorgan have now joined the other Welsh education authorities that have decided to launch projects based on the technical and vocational education initiative. I have also made arrangements for additional financial provision for the advanced further education sector in Wales.

Having referred to the schools, I want to deal with the allegation that is so frequently made that there has been a substantial cut in education provision. In reality, and taking account of inflation, the figures show that expenditure on the education service has not been reduced at all during our period in government, despite the fall in pupil numbers that has taken place. Current expenditure on education, excluding meals and milk, in real terms has remained virtually constant, though the number of pupils has declined by more than 10 per cent. As a result, pupil-teacher ratios have improved and the expenditure per pupil has risen. Undoubtedly individual schools face real difficulties; but when we have the best ever pupil-teacher ratio and the best ever expenditure per head this must be because local authorities are not making the best possible use of resources.

If improved training and education are one contribution we can make to economic recovery, the effective use of capital expenditure is clearly another. I have already referred to the fact that manufacturing investment is sharply up and that we are seeing a surge of major capital projects. Capital investment is not confined to the private sector. We are running very large public sector capital programmes in Wales. Over the next three years, on present plans, capital expenditure by local authorities, the Welsh Office and its agencies is likely to be of the order of £2 billion.

Investment in the trunk road programme has averaged about £116 million over the last three financial years and will average about £126 million over the next three. We are spending over £42 million this year on building new hospitals, which is over 11 per cent. more in real terms than when this Government took office. The Welsh water authority, which is spending £40 million this year on capital projects, is planning to increase expenditure to £55 million next year and approximately £70 million the year after. One consequence of the relative success by Welsh local authorities in holding down current expenditure—I am glad to see that average rate increases in Wales are likely to be less than 7 per cent. this year—has been that net capital resources that we have been able to make available to local authorities are at a level nearly double those of England in per capita terms.

It was in the course of the Welsh day debate just two years ago, in February 1983, that I announced the first projects to be approved in Wales under what was then the new urban development grant scheme. The present position is that 31 projects have been approved under the UDG scheme. They include industrial, housing, hotel, office and commercial developments, and grants amounting to some £10·5 million are helping to bring forward total investment of over £65 million in urban areas throughout Wales. One of the most encouraging features of the UDG scheme in Wales has been the way in which it has stimulated private housing development in some of our valley areas where there has been little or no new private housebuilding for many years.

Recent UDG approvals have included a grant of £1·4 million to ensure that much-needed refurbishment of the Kingsway shopping centre in Newport will go ahead shortly. The total development will cost £4·8 million and there are good prospects of very substantial additional shopping investment as a direct spin-off from the refurbishment scheme.

In Cardiff the Holiday Inn project, which I announced two years ago, is going well. In the Welsh day debate two years ago, I called upon local authorities, public bodies, landowners and developers to come forward with imaginative proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment of the largely derelict dockland areas of Cardiff south of the main railway line. I was heartened by the enthusiastic response from all quarters and proposals came forward from several major development companies.

Proposals put forward by Tarmac plc were eventually selected and submitted to me by South Glamorgan county

council for consideration for urban development grant support. I am delighted to be able to announce today, following discussions in which the county council has been fully involved, that I have approved an urban development grant framework based on a grant of £8·5 million in respect of the Tarmac proposals. There are, of course, many points of detail still to be resolved and I must emphasise that no development can take place until all statutory procedures associated with the acquisition of the necessary land are fulfilled. But, subject to those provisions, I am confident that the UDG framework which I have approved will enable the county council and Tarmac plc to proceed with the detailed work involved in implementing its exciting proposals for the regeneration of this part of our capital city. The chairman of Tarmac assured me today that he was enthusiastic to go ahead with the scheme and that the company would do everything it could to make the scheme work as it was originally conceived. He committed the resources of Tarmac, and I for my part said that we would approach our commitments with the flexibility that is necessary for a scheme of this scale and complexity. This is a very important day for Cardiff. My one regret is that Michael Roberts is not with us to see it through; he was in at the start.

While on the subject of capital projects I want to say a word about the Severn bridge. Hon Members will recall that our programme for the maintenance and strengthening work on the Severn bridge was announced as long ago as February 1984. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) sought information in a parliamentary question last week, and there was no new information in the answer except that a lot more work has now been done on the detail of the five-year programme. A major objective of the timing of this programme is to avoid delays on the bridge; immense care is being taken in planning the work to achieve that.

I can also tell the House that the consultants who were appointed in August 1984 to carry out a study of the second crossing have now completed the first part of the study and copies will shortly be placed in the Library. Moreover, they have already started work on the second phase and it is the intention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport to give full details of the possible options very shortly. I can assure the House that we are absolutely determined to safeguard this vital crossing and to ensure that there is the minimum possible interruption to traffic at any stage during the repair programme. Nothing has changed since the announcement of the repairs and the feasibility study on 7 February 1984 and it is irresponsible for the hon. Member for Newport, East to suggest that there are new and unknown factors that give cause for alarm. I can assure him that there are not.

I have described the way in which we are using capital resources in the public sector to improve the infrastructure and the social and working environment in Wales. Increasingly that public sector investment is being paralleled by the contribution from the private sector. The developments that are taking place in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport are examples of urban renewal based on that partnership.

Health care is, and will remain, pre-eminently and overwhelmingly the responsibility of the state; but here too the private sector can supplement the resources available to the National Health Service. This Government have provided a substantial increase in real resources to the Health Service. With these extra resources we have been able to provide an increase of over 15 per cent. in the numbers of front line staff—doctors, dentists, nurses and others directly concerned with the care of patients. We are achieving a substantial increase in the number of inpatient and outpatient cases and the introduction of important new regional services.

One important reason for involving the private sector in the provision of renal dialysis services within the NHS is not just to make use of the considerable experience of the firms involved but the fact that they are providing capital resources for the units at Carmarthen and Bangor amounting to about £400,000, enabling us to spend comparable sums on other services. My "open door" policy for renal dialysis with a network of subsidiary units is the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. The third main renal unit at Swansea, which I announced at this time last year, is nearing completion and will begin to accept patients in March. The bone marrow transplant programme, which I also spoke of at that time, has been in operation for some months. On other fronts, we are now at the detailed planning stage of the expanding cardiac surgery and cardiology service and are relocating the burns and plastic surgery unit. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my previous commitment to the all-Wales strategy for the development of services for mentally handicapped people.

To make the best possible use of resources I have taken decisions to strengthen at all levels the general management of the NHS in Wales. I was delighted to be able to appoint Mr. John Wyn Owen to be the new director of the NHS in Wales. He has very wide relevant experience both inside the Health Service and in the private sector, and he is already making his presence felt. All district health authorities in Wales have now appointed district general managers. In 1985 I shall set timetables for the introduction of strengthened general management, including the appointment of general managers, in each health unit.

The past year has been intensely difficult for farming and particularly for the livestock sector. The dairy industry is undergoing a traumatic process of readjustment following the introduction of quotas for milk. This is having a spin-off effect on other sectors, notably beef and the suppliers of agricultural machinery and feedingstuffs. Added to these difficulties, farmers in Wales were badly affected by the drought during 1984.

There will be a warm welcome among milk producers, as there was from the Opposition Front Bench earlier, for the announcement made by my right hon. Friend that milk producers who have both direct and wholesale quota can now switch their production between these two within their overall quota. Representations from farmers in Wales are concentrating on three main areas of concern. The first is the outcome of the consideration by the tribunal of exceptional hardship applications and appeals against local panel decisions, together with the allocations to be made under the outgoers scheme. The tribunal has completed its work, except for a few straggler cases, and is notifying producers of its decisions as quickly as possible. We are all indebted to the chairman and members of the tribunal and its local panels for their hard work—it was very hard work — in completing a difficult task under considerable pressure. Our present estimate is that development awards will be scaled down by between 35 per cent. and 40 per cent.

All applicants under the outgoers scheme have been asked to indicate by 13 March whether they wish to join.

[Mr. Edwards]

We expect that, taking England and Wales as a whole, we shall obtain sufficient quota to meet our objectives to offset exceptional hardship claims and ensure that producers selling less than 200,000 litres will have their 1985-86 quota restored to the 1983 pre-quota production levels. That would be of immediate benefit to 54 per cent. of Welsh producers.

The second subject about which we are receiving representations is the CAP price-fixing proposals. The prime concern of livestock producers will be to correct the imbalance that exists between cereals and livestock. Bearing in mind that there are still huge surpluses within the Community it must be in the interests of this country to avoid price increases. A 5 per cent. cut in cereal support prices, required by the guaranteed threshold, should be applied, and the British Government have made it clear that we would have preferred a further reduction in the co-responsibility levy to the target price increase of 1·5 per cent. for milk. Other key objectives will be the maintenance of the sheepmeat regime in essentially its present form and the retention of the beef premium scheme. Against a background of excess production and United Kingdom spending on CAP measures and national price guarantees that together are expected to amount to over £1·4 billion in 1985-86, it is not unreasonable that we should seek some savings in expenditure on capital grants.

The third matter to which the Government are devoting a great deal of thought and on which they are consulting widely is the way in which we can develop policies that will enable farmers to plan for the future with greater confidence. There will be a need, for example, to reach agreement on more flexible rules for the transfer of quota and provision for new entrants; but, more generally, there is a need to devise support systems that maintain rural communities and family farms without creating excess production at a cost to the taxpayer that is unacceptable. During the period ahead, it will be vital to ensure that Welsh farmers continue to benefit from England and Wales support and marketing arrangements. The advantage of such England and Wales arrangements can clearly be seen in the outgoers scheme, which will transfer substantial quota from England into Wales. Wales has surrendered about 11 per cent. but it is estimated that it will receive about 25 per cent. of reallocated quota.

There are those who urge us to seek special quota from the European Community for Wales or for Dyfed, the part of Wales worst affected by milk quotas. I have regretfully come to the conclusion that it would not be helpful to Welsh farmers to seek to reopen the European Community 1984-85 agreement on milk quotas. The Commission has made no proposals to change the quota package including the special quota reserve but already, as we heard this afternoon, the Irish are bidding for more, and it is unlikely to be in the interests of British farmers to have a revision of quota limits. It would be difficult to do as was suggested earlier and resist that Irish demand and at the same time make a comparable demand ourselves.

In any case, other producers in the United Kingdom outside Wales with similar problems would demand similar special treatment. Producers with similar problems deserve similar treatment whichever part of the Milk Marketing Board area they come from. I have no doubt at all that, if the special treatment were conceded to Welsh milk producers the integrated Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales would come under stress and there would be a counter demand to separate Wales from the England and Wales arrangement. We faced and resisted just that demand in connection with the outgoers scheme. I can think of nothing that would be more disastrous for Welsh agriculture than to find itself isolated in this way.

Mr. Thomas: Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the argument of Dyfed county council that there is a case for special treatment for Welsh producers in view of the relatively greater importance of the milk industry in Dyfed and other parts of Wales and in view of the impact of the quota system on production and employment in the industry?

Mr. Edwards: I understand that argument. It has already been advanced by producers from the south-west who hurried off to Brussels in pursuit of those from Dyfed. Dr. Ventura from the Commission has told my Department that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to add a region to the reserve and that we have no chance of getting a share of the reserve for Dyfed, which could not be considered as a region in European Community terms. There are immense difficulties.

During this period of change, Welsh agriculture will particularly need to improve the marketing of its products. I welcome initiatives such as that of Welsh Lamb Enterprise and studies by the development agencies. These initiatives will need to be vigorously pursued. I am sure that the House will be glad to know that Mr. John Elfed Jones has accepted my invitation to join the Council of Food from Britain. He played a key role in marketing the industrial advantages of Wales during his period as industrial director at the Welsh Office. He, together with the chairman of the development agencies and the tourist board, met me recently to discuss the effective marketing of Wales.

The House must understand this: it is absolutely crucial, if we are to create the jobs, the opportunities and the kind of environment for living that we would all like to see, to sell successfully Welsh products, the industrial advantages of Wales, the tourist attractions of Wales and the potential of Wales for investors and financial institutions. We have to make better known the cultural and creative activity that is going on within Wales. We of course have difficulties, but a great deal is changing for the better as well.

Tonight we shall no doubt hear the usual dirge from the Opposition. There will be every sort of complaint. In strident terms, for their own political advantage they will run their scares, repeat their libels and sell Wales short. That is always their cry and it does some damage. Fortunately, fewer and fewer people listen and more and more recognise and applaud the transformation taking place in Wales and wish to be part of it.

5.49 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside):

"The Welsh people are having to pay for the profligate folly of this Government through higher interest rates, higher mortgage rates and the loss of jobs. It was totally unnecessary." Those are not my words, but the words of the Secretary of State when he held my position in 1978.

The Under-Secretary of State said then:

"We shall return to the subject of employment time and again in all the ways open to us, because we regard it as of supreme importance to the people of Wales. It is important to us as a party and we shall never let the Government forget that there are still

more than twice as many unemployed now as when we left office in 1974." — [*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee;* 29 November 1978, c. 23, 77.]

Just before the Secretary of State finished his speech he tried to libel the Opposition, but I have faithfully reproduced his and his hon. Friend's words when they tried to libel the then Government.

I note that the Secretary of State has promised us massive inward investment and, by implication, many jobs in the coming year. Of course, we shall need those jobs, because he failed to get the Nissan project. I wonder whether, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Under-Secretary of State will be able to tell us whether the Honda company visited the Secretary of State. The headline in the *Western Mail* of 27 February concerning Cardiff was:

"Blow for city as 400 jobs are axed."

Recently in Delyn, Courtaulds announced 232 job losses; Sealink in Anglesey talked about 70 job losses; in Aberavon, Borg Warner announced about 800 job losses; and in Cardiff and Swansea, Howells Motors announced about 90 job losses. The Opposition wish to make the point that, however many hundreds of jobs the Secretary of State promises in the year ahead from inward investment, they are unlikely to equal the number of jobs lost during the past few months.

Mr. Best: Does the hon. Gentleman know what he is taking about in relation to my constituency? He mentioned 70 jobs, which will go by way of voluntary redundancy. Is he aware that those redundancies are being sought to secure a freight liner contract for the next five years which will put beyond doubt the continuance of the container service—an issue which under his Administration was hanging by a slender thread?

Mr. Jones: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but I was pleased to give him the chance to make it. In his constituency of Ynys Môn there are 4,951 jobless people. In Holyhead, male unemployment is 25 per cent. I look forward to hearing the speech which the hon. Gentleman may make later in the debate urging the Secretary of State to take action so that some of the unemployed in his constituency might have work.

The Secretary of State slanted much of his speech in the direction of the economy and of unemployment. I must remind the House that there are 185,000 jobless Welsh people, which represents an increase since 1979 of 125 per cent. In Wales as a whole, one in five men is jobless. in the Secretary of State's constituency of Pembroke, 7,151 are jobless. In my travel-to-work area, 13,517 people are jobless and male unemployment is 20 per cent. The question that I must ask the Secretary of State is this: when, under his policies, will our fellow Welsh citizens have a reasonable prospect of work? For five years he has promised us the broad sunlit uplands, but unemployment increases inexorably, Wales is deindustrialised, public expenditure is cut, the rate support grant is slashed, regional aid is cut, the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales are given insufficient funds to carry out their onerous tasks, and the housing budgets are cut.

Why do the Government wish to close skillcentres during an unemployment crisis? Both Welsh centres scheduled for closure are supported by local industrialists and trade unions, and they are vital to the needs of the area. The west Gwent centre at Pontllanfraith serves a vast industrial, densely-populated area, and it is immensely popular with local industry. People attend it for top-level training from throughout the south Wales valleys—an area with unemployment of more than 20 per cent. I would argue that it is among the worst afflicted areas of Great Britain.

If the Pontllanfraith centre is to close, people who require skillcentre training will face journeys of up to 60 miles each day to the nearest centres at Cardiff and Newport. There is a clear need for the west Gwent centre, because, with such high unemployment, it is criminal to reduce training in the valleys. I have visited the centre, which runs a superb industrial electronics course. Llanelli has 18 per cent. unemployment, and more than a third of the unemployed have suffered the indignity and despair of being without work for more than a year. During a visit to that centre I saw some superb examples of success. I saw teenagers engaged in learning skills which will increase their chances of permanent jobs. If the centre at Llanelli is closed, there will be no skillcentre to the west of Port Talbot. The Llanelli centre can already boast a 72 per cent. placement record.

It sometimes happens that industry suffers a shortage of skilled labour at the peak of a boom in the economy, but in Wales we are suffering skill shortages at the trough of a depression, with the Principality losing 145,000 jobs in five years.

Many of us fear that the Secretary of State is in danger of exchanging the substance for the shadow of a peripatetic training team system. We fear that the new system will be lacking in quantity, accessibility, continuity and quality of skill training. I shall always sponsor improvements to skillcentres, but I warn the Secretary of State that the local communities are deeply offended by the closure proposals. It is now arguable that there is no longer a majority of MSC commissioners in favour of the closure proposals. The Scottish local authority member has resiled from his previous position, and the Opposition argue that there is now a six to four majority against doing what the Secretary of State for Employment announced in the House last week.

Scotland has outpaced Wales in the electronics industry. The silicon glen has proved to be a thundering success, and Scotland enjoys 40,000 jobs created by more than 200 new companies. It has the highest concentration of integrated circuits in Europe. I believe — the Secretary of State may agree with me—that high tech for Wales is crucial and that we must aim to have a modern, 21st century economy. But the silicon valley has yet to make its mark, and I believe that the Secretary of State has been remiss in this area. I urge him to increase the number of research places at our universities, to enlarge the links between the electronics industry and secondary schools, to double the places for electronics graduates at Cardiff and Swansea universities and to push ahead with his plans for science parks in north and south Wales. The Deeside industrial park and the University College of North Wales at Bangor could be growth points for technology.

The right hon. Gentleman did not dwell upon housing in Wales. The Government allow some 18,000 Welsh building workers, drawing an estimated annual dole payment of £90 million, to remain jobless when Welsh housing conditions are the despair of our housing officers.

A recent report into housing conditions in Cynon Valley showed that a staggering 48 per cent. of all privately

[Mr. Jones]

owned homes were unfit and that almost one quarter lack the most basic amenities. The belief held by Welsh housing experts is that such dismal statistics are not limited to Cynon Valley—there is a similar problem in many of our poorer communities—and that with the continued lack of Government investment the position is likely to worsen. What they and I find most disturbing is that Ministers seemingly have little knowledge of the scale of the problem. The Cynon Valley figures came to light because of a detailed investigation by that district authority.

Housing authorities' new build in Wales is down 50 per cent. on the figure for two years past. Repair schemes have been cut and large numbers of renovation grants are outstanding in every Welsh district authority area. All sectors have repeatedly made the point that Wales, with its disproportionate number of old and decaying properties, is a special housing case and that it needs special levels of investment.

With those disturbing figures from Cynon Valley in mind, it is clear that we need a meticulous and detailed investigation into the Welsh housing problem, taking the country district by district. That call has also been made by south Wales chief housing officers.

Mr. Best: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why under the last Labour Administration public sector house building fell by 85 per cent?

Mr. Jones: I believe that the record of Labour Administrations compares well with that of Conservative Administrations. I urge the hon. Gentleman, if he can catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to remind his right hon. Friend that 4,951 of his constituents are out of work and to urge him to step up house building so that many of his unemployed constituents can obtain jobs building houses for unemployed people.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman has talked about the need for special measures with regard to improvement grants. The Government are spending about £80 million this year, and we spent about £107 million last year on improvement grants. That compares with a total of only £58 million or so during the whole of the five years in office of the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Jones: I must remind the Under-Secretary that the Association of District Councils said that capital spending for Welsh local authorities had suffered a real cut of £100 million in two years and that the brunt of that reduction was being borne by the housing services, for which capital spending was being cut by one third, or £80 million. Housing in Wales is, of now, the Augean stables of the Government's activities, and I hope that the Under-Secretary will give some account of himself if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is a savage irony for Welsh people. They have seen their cash-starved local authorities suffer reduced spending through Government interference, targets, penalties and the threat of rate capping, yet the Government now interfere with the water authorities in the opposite way. The Government denounce local authorities for raising their rates higher than the rate of inflation, but force the Welsh water authority to increase its charges hugely. Despite prudent budgeting and severe cuts in the labour force, the Welsh water authority has been forced by the Government to increase domestic charges by more than 12 per cent. It is clear that the authority does not want to impose such a savage increase. It is equally clear that, with inflation running at 5 per cent., those increases in water charges will be the cause of fierce resentment in Wales.

The harsh point is that the water authority has said that it prefers to keep its charges in line with inflation. Its attempts to budget carefully and to keep the interests of the consumers to the forefront have been sabotaged by the Government. At present Welsh water consumers find their already unfair position worsened through what amounts to a tax on the water that they use.

The Flintshire branch of the National Farmers Union wrote to me about the proposal to increase water charges by 12·5 per cent.—as it put it—for 1985-86. It said:

> "It is difficult to understand why a Government which takes strenuous steps to keep down inflation to 5 per cent. directs Water Authorities to increase their charges by 12½ per cent. We believe that the Government is applying pressure on Water Authorities to make excess profits in order to avoid capital borrowing. . . . It surely must be wrong for a Government to raise revenue from a public monopoly which is indispensable to everyone but which bears harshly on many least able to pay these charges."

The right hon. Gentleman referred to agriculture. I, too, must welcome the relief that he has announced to those who produce wholesale and retail milk. It is an important step. He has had many representations from throughout Wales. The industry has taken harsh knocks during this past year. Wales was dismayed by the cuts at the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth. The milk quota crisis created unprecedented apprehension among dairy farmers, and it caused financial and business difficulties.

There have been strains in the sheepmeat and beef markets. Cuts in capital grants have been badly received. It is calculated, allowing for inflation of 4 per cent. for 1985-86, that the Welsh Office agriculture budget faces an 8 per cent. reduction in real terms this coming year.

I warn the right hon. Gentleman that, as Wales has one quarter of Britain's 9 million sheep, he had better carefully consider the sheepmeat regime. The same applies to the beef sector. Welsh farmers in those sectors expect better of the Government than the dairy quota saga, which hurt so many small farmers. I must stress that 90 per cent. of Welsh farmers depend upon livestock for their living. They have no prospect of turning elsewhere if they have to leave that sector.

The Opposition are anxious about the declining prospect for rural Wales. The dairy quota crisis carried with it job losses in the creameries. We fear job losses and declining services in villages and towns as a result of the Transport Bill. The parliamentary opposition to the Transport Bill will be the stiffest possible.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned coal. A programme of pit closures in south Wales will leave many valley communities desperately vulnerable, both economically and socially. The male unemployment figures for the south Wales coalfield are too serious to contemplate closures. In Gwent, male unemployment stands at 20 per cent.; in mid-Glamorgan, 23 per cent.; in west Glamorgan, 20 per cent. and in Dyfed, 20 per cent. It is arguable that unemployment may double to 40 per cent in some of the pit communities in the valleys. We know of an area——

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give me a straight answer? Does he agree with the TUC or with Mr. Scargill on pit closures?

Mr. Jones: The situation is far too serious for the hon. Gentleman to attempt to precis a complicated matter. It does no right hon. or hon. Member any good to push too hard on issues which may be being resolved now, or which may be resolved soon.

Last month, when I visited St. John's colliery in Maesteg, the lodge officials told me that their town could ill afford to lose the colliery's 900 jobs. They reminded me that the Llyfni valley once yielded 10,000 coal-mining jobs, but today has only 1,100. They were young men with families, and they were worried about the prospects for the boys and girls leaving school. They wanted to know where these young people could get jobs locally. They told me that they could see no prospect of alternative jobs if the colliery closed.

The Secretary of State was not able to say how, in the years ahead, he could see mass unemployment in Wales being reduced. These are the questions which the mining communities, and the valley communities as a whole, are asking. Where will new jobs come from, given mass unemployment as it now exists? The Secretary of State and the Tory party are not giving many answers to that crucial question.

The Welsh coalfield has special and vital coals that are in short supply. Britain is short of anthracite, prime coking coal and first-class domestic fuel coal, and we shall need every tonne of power station coal as well. There is a market for more than 9·5 million tonnes of Welsh coal a year. On this basis, we support the south Wales NUM. At best, there are only 20,000 jobs in the pipeline for the next four years. What hope can this present to the almost 50 per cent. of Wales's jobless who have been unemployed for more than a year?

The Secretary of State should tell his colleagues in the Treasury that Wales needs jobs and hope. We need a reversal of housing cuts, an immediate announcement of a second crossing over the Severn, a greatly strengthened regional policy, the restoration of the cuts that have been announced in regional aid, high-tech coal faces for our coalfield, major rail investment programmes, including the electrification of the Crewe-Holyhead and Swansea-Paddington lines, action on Wales's decaying sewers and water mains, and the setting up of co-operatives in the knowledge that they generate jobs in the manufacturing sector and offer full worker democracy. These projects are desirable in themselves and are capable of generating many new jobs.

I have travelled extensively in Wales and frequently to areas which I previously visited as a Minister in the 1970s. I am concerned at the incidence of poverty, the degeneration in housing conditions and the despair created by unemployment and its frequency.

The consensus in Wales—that is, of all but the most obdurate and ideologically committed Conservatives—is that urgent action must be taken to lessen the evils of the mass unemployment problem. At Merthyr last Monday, 300 people crowded into the town hall to attend a conference on unemployment. I report to the House anger and fear at the lack of prospects for the jobless. It was not an assembly of extremists—indeed, it was addressed by the Archbishop of Wales. It is clear from meetings such as that at Merthyr that the Welsh people are desperately anxious for a change of course in the Government's policy. The Opposition suggest that the Budget presents the Government with a major opportunity to lessen the evil consequences of their policies. We want to see a lessening of the misery and despair that mass unemployment creates. We demand from the Secretary of State and the Government an urgent and decisive change of policy in favour of the unemployed.

6.15 pm

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) made a long speech attacking the ills of the Welsh economy, but one cannot consider the ills of Wales without considering the Welsh economy in the context of the British economy, the EEC economy and the world economy, which he entirely failed to do. The factors that have handicapped industry in Britain and Wales in the past decade or more have not been those that can easily be rectified solely within the Welsh setting. Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the loss of the captive markets of the Commonwealth and the decline of the old basic industries such as coal, iron, steel and tinplate have happened not only here but in every comparable country? The lateness of Britain's entry into the Common Market created another great disadvantage with which we had to contend.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): You can say that again!

Sir Raymond Gower: No, it was the lateness of our entry that caused the problem. Had we entered the Common Market sooner, we should have been in a much stronger position.

We have a bad heritage not only from obsolete machinery but from obsolescent labour attitudes in industry, bad labour relations and bad practices to which, even now, we have not found a solution. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside does not recognise the effect that the vast growth in the economies of Japan and many other countries in the far east, such as South Korea, the great competition that has emanated from there and even the growth of the industrial economies of countries such as Spain has had on Britain and Wales.

The new technologies have made our traditional skills relatively less important and the burden of excessive bureaucracy, not only in our administration but in our public industries and, to some extent, in private industries and overmanning in industry have all created problems that we have not even yet succeeded in solving. There has also been the failure of successive United Kingdom Governments—I include Governments of both parties—to recognise in full the magnitude of these changes. They have not been tackled when they could have been tackled more easily.

All this is a heritage that is extraordinarily difficult for a country to overcome. The result has been that the huge task of not only changing but reviving the Welsh economy and meeting these new challenges has not been carried out.

On the other hand, some encouraging features have not yet been mentioned. It is a great advantage that for some time there has been a consistently low rate of inflation. It is still not sufficiently low, and is still greatly in excess of that of many comparable industrial countries in Europe and elsewhere in the world. We should be encouraged by the proportion of the newer industries, both internally

[Sir Raymond Gower]

created and from abroad, that have come into the Principality. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned this point, and it is encouraging that the rate is far greater than we might have anticipated. It is an enormous achievement for us to have 24 per cent. of such industries coming into a relatively small part of the United Kingdom. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside seldom refers in Welsh debates to the credit side of the balance.

The work of the industrial division of the Welsh Office and of the Welsh Development Agency is highly to be commended. Their achievements have not been inconsiderable and have exceeded many of our expectations.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman would comment on the practice of some multinational companies in Wales which recently threatened employees that, unless they accepted wage cuts, investment would be deferred. Some have also demanded early retirement, as happened recently in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Sir Raymond Gower: I deprecate such threats, but we lack realism. When, three or four years ago, there was industrial difficulty in the United States, trade unions accepted reductions in earnings. That agreement has borne remarkable fruit. I do not attribute blame to one side of industry, but we must recognise collectively the magnitude of the task. The hon. Gentleman's intervention shows that he does not recognise it. I have no evidence of such threats, but I accept the hon. Gentleman's word that there might have been some in some obscure place. I have not heard of any in a major industry.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way as he referred to my constituency as an obscure place. Is he aware that the Japanese company Hitachi recently asked employees aged over 35 to take early retirement?

Sir Raymond Gower: I did not refer to the hon. Lady's constituency. I am aware that Hitachi has been in some difficulty.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: We should welcome the substantial investment that Hitachi is making to provide future employment.

Sir Raymond Gower: Indeed. I should have thought that all hon. Members would welcome that investment.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside welcomes the institution of the first Welsh business centre for technology in his constituency. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) must be pleased that a similar business technology centre has been established in Newport. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the setting up of WINvest for inward investment and the establishment of WINtech to stimulate the technological development that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside agrees we badly need. We must admit that Wales still lacks high technology. Like the rest of the United Kingdom, Wales lacks robot technology. Unfortunately, Britain is lowest in the European league in that innovation.

I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside that far too many of our people are out of work. I agree that far too few jobs are available. I assure him tha worry on that count is not confined to one side of th House. We also are keen to find a solution, but it will no be easy to reconcile the control of inflation an management of the economy with the creation of ne jobs. Nevertheless, that must be our objective. It is a operation that will require the co-operation of ever interest and person in the Principality. Wales cannot a in isolation.

Ministers must not be reluctant to explain or to desi from explaining the urgency of the task. The solutio cannot be achieved by Government alone, or by industr alone. However, I do not believe that things are as dism as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside would have u believe. There is now greater confidence in industry tha there was a few years ago. Most of the jobs that have bee lost have been in the old industries which have been i difficulty throughout the world, while the not inconside able number of new jobs are in modern industries. That encouraging.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in on of those new industries—electronics—Wales has lo 521 jobs during the past 10 years?

Sir Raymond Gower: When new industries star some will falter and some will fail. It is remarkable how in difficult circumstances, many have establishe themselves and are contriving to do reasonably wel Britain must contend with highly competitive markets.

Although there are signs of revival in industry companies have been handicapped by the coal indust strike. It is understandable that people in mining areas a worried about employment, but the hon. Member for Aly and Deeside must agree that it is extremely sad that th continuance of the strike has imperilled some pits tha were not originally threatened. There cannot be a victo in a strike such as this, but it would be a sombre day fo Wales and for Britain if it appeared that violence and ma picketing has triumphed. We must hope that an ear resolution of the dispute will be followed by a readines on both sides to reconstruct and restore the industry.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentione the Severn crossing. We can expect the publication of th feasibility study in just over a year. I hope that it will b followed by prompt and fearless action by the Governme to ensure that we have a reliable link across the Severn If it is practical, I should prefer a Severn barrage with road over the barrage. Such an imaginative developme would be beneficial on both sides of the Bristol channe I assure my right hon. Friend that, if the Government sho a lack of readiness to take effective measures aft publication of the study, right hon. and hon. Membe from Wales will be united in trying to force a quic response from the Government. This is not a partisa issue. It is particularly important to the southern half Wales.

An unpleasant disease has appeared in Wales, which colloquially described as AIDS. I have long taken a interest in the work of the Welsh transfusion centre Rhydlafer which, until recently, was in my constituency I have asked Ministers in the Welsh Office, th Department of Health and Social Security and the Scottis Office many questions. Whatever Ministers may say, th signs that we have from other countries of the growth that disease, with which medical science has only a limite

ability to deal, show that this is a much more dangerous and horrific disease than either the British medical profession or Ministers are prepared to acknowledge.

I am afraid that there is an undue amount of complacency about this terrifying disease. I am particularly worried about the position of those who administer our blood transfusion centres. I hope that Ministers will bear in mind the strong case, which has so far been resisted, that AIDS should be a notifiable disease. If ever there were a case for making any disease notifiable, this is it. Health in the Principality is part of my right hon. Friend's responsibility. This may be one of the most formidable and horrifying problems with which he has had to deal.

6.31 pm

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): Tempting as it would be to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on AIDS and his foolish suggestion that it should be a notifiable disease, which would probably drive the whole issue underground and undoubtedly add to the genuine concerns of all of us about that, I shall not do so.

Fortunately, as a result of the vigorous and wide-ranging speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), there is no necessity for us to concentrate upon the broader issues. Instead, we can deal with those particular issues which Back Benchers fortunately have the opportunity to deal with on a Welsh day.

It will not surprise the Secretary of State for Wales to hear that I shall be returning to all the problems that are arising out of the proceedings relating to bad work in our hospitals in Wales. I do not wish to recall again the attempts to mask the now notorious settlement of the University of Wales hospital. I do not want to go again into the details of how the surveyors' report was denied to the House and never placed in the Library until more than 12 months after the settlement. I do not want to go again into the details of how that settlement was presented only after vigorous press and House of Commons questions. I do not want to go again into the detail of how derisory it was and how it sought to exclude parliamentary surveillance and how evasive even when the storm had burst was the Secretary of State's approach, hiding, as it was, the revealing statement of claim of the action until he was forced to disgorge it.

Wales has made its judgment on the bungling and failure to monitor the issues with which the Secretary of State for Wales has so recently been involved. The taxpayer groans again as he observes that he will now be likely to be compelled to pay yet again as the architects sue the Secretary of State because of his appallingly maladroit handling of the issue.

I record these matters only to emphasise that it would be intolerable if, in the new set of claims on which the Secretary of State's agency is now embarking in respect of the defective work of the residential blocks of the Bangor hospital, we were to find displayed the same equivocation and bungling that characterised the University of Wales hospital affair. Those new claims, of which we are now belatedly learning, involving as they do two main companies, IDC Ltd. and HDC Ltd., with both of which Mr. Denis Thatcher is associated, raise issues which are deeply troubling.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Hospital Design Consortium consists of S. W. Milburn and Partners, W. T. Hill and Co., quantity surveyors, and W. S. Atkins, engineers. I know of no connection between that consortium and Mr. Thatcher. The hon. Gentleman is muddling that consortium with another organisation.

Mr. Abse: In September 1981 *The Times* referred to the IDC Group Ltd., of which Housing Development Construction Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary. I would welcome the chance to give the Secretary of State the opportunity to explain that there is no association in respect of that company with Mr. Denis Thatcher.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has answered his own question. He gave the name associated with the letters that he spelled out. The Hospital Design Consortium was appointed in 1970 under the old Welsh hospital board and carried through the design work on that hospital. I have given the hon. Gentleman the companies that comprised that consortium.

Mr. Abse: If the acronym is misleading, as the right hon. Gentleman is seeking to point out, I welcome that. But it does not detract from the main substance of what I want to say since, clearly, the main company concerned, IDC Ltd., is associated with Mr. Denis Thatcher. Would the right hon. Gentleman like to intervene again to dissociate Mr. Denis Thatcher from IDC Ltd.? I notice that he does not and I am not surprised.

I notice in a vigorous and lively column by Mr. Paul Foot in the *Daily Mirror* that, on being questioned, IDC Ltd. was not prepared to say that Mr. Denis Thatcher was not associated with it.

The tactics that were adopted over the University of Wales hospital to mask the facts have, I regret to say, evidently taken place again. The evasion first began when the Welsh Office was questioned by the press about the defective buildings at Bangor. The *Western Mail* has made it clear how the press were initially sidetracked. On 20 February Mr. John Hibbs reported:

"Two weeks ago in response to press enquiries the Welsh Office provided details of legal action against the consortium responsible for the overall design of the hospital complex at Bangor. But it said nothing then about the preliminary action under contract against IDC or a sub-contractor both of which were involved in the construction of the nurses home."

We began with what I believe to be an evasion. The press did not then appreciate and was not helped to appreciate that IDC, the company with which Mr. Thatcher is associated, was in any way involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside raised the issue on 11 February when, among other questions, he asked the Secretary of State:

"may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say whether legal proceedings and writs are involved involving any other major hospitals in the Principality?"

How did the Secretary of State reply? He said:

"A writ was issued on 1 November in respect of Ysbyty Gwynedd and a statement of claim is being prepared." —[*Official Report*, 11 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 4.]

Did the right hon. Gentleman say against whom? Did he mention in any manner or form that one of the companies, the major company involved, was the company with which Mr. Thatcher was associated? No. He displayed extraordinary reticence.

What happened next? A statement was made in the House of Commons. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside asked:

[Mr. Abse]

"Has he issued writs against the construction company that built the nurses' home, which has major problems? Is the IDC construction company the company that built the nurses' home? What is the scale of moneys that the right hon. Gentleman seeks as compensation?"—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 172.]

Those were three clear, important and unequivocal questions that the Secretary of State was asked, and he did not show that he was pressed for time in the statement that he made on that day. One can look through *Hansard*, read it again and again, and find no answer at all to any of those three questions. However, the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside had revealed that IDC Ltd. was involved inevitably meant that the Welsh Office was bombarded with questions, knowing the association of IDC with Mr. Denis Thatcher.

Then and only then, after all that diffidence, out of the blue came a letter from the Secretary of State addressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside, dated 18 February. Suddenly it appeared that the Secretary of State for Wales was using *Hansard* for his light reading — it was nothing to do with the bombardment of questions on the Welsh Office in respect of IDC. The letter came spontaneously, saying:

"On reading the Official Report for 12 February I see that although I gave a generalised answer there were specific questions that you asked about the IDC construction company and the nurses home in Bangor which I did not answer."

So out of that light reading, not prompted by civil servants or the bombardment of questions on the Welsh Office, suddenly that spontaneous letter came in which the right hon. Gentleman felt he should reveal what we now know. The credibility of that will be judged by Wales, as it will be by the House. In the statement we learnt that a claim had been submitted to IDC Ltd., which was the main contractor, about defective construction work. In his letter the Secretary of State said:

"This is presently the subject of negotiation. The question of a writ will only arise if negotiations are not successful."

The right hon. Gentleman added that IDC Ltd.

"has also been joined as a Third Party by the sub-contractors, Haden Young Ltd., against whom WHTSO has issued proceedings as a result of fire damage to the residences."

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does my hon. Friend recognise that he is luckier than some of us in the House have been when we have tried to probe the Thatcher involvement in commercial contracts? Many of us spent five months trying to establish whether the Prime Minister knew or did not know of her son's involvement in the Cementation contract at the time that he was in Oman with her. She evaded and evaded in the same way that the Welsh Office has evaded for several months. She successfully evaded for five months, using every blocking system available. Therefore, I congratulate my hon. Friend on having completed that investigation, so we can return to the Oman question.

Mr. Abse: I shall return to the Oman question as I seek to develop my argument because what my right hon. Friend says is relevant to the issue.

I should like to know how those matters between the Secretary of State for Wales and the company concerned will be dealt with by him. Let me put the issue to him bluntly. How can the taxpayers feel confident that the Secretary of State, without fear or favour, will pursue those claims against his premier's husband? In particular, how can Wales feel confident that the claim is pursued vigorously when it is known that the Secre State intervened at Mr. Thatcher's request—some say command—on behalf of that self-same com expedite a planning hearing?

Wales recalls the "Dear Nick" letter written Downing street notepaper to the Secretary of St how, thanks to a leak in *The Times*, we learnt h Secretary of State responded to that letter fro Thatcher. He responded like a circus dog to his trai said:

"The explanation . . . had better be good and quick week."

Such obeisances by the Secretary of State in the not encourage the belief that he will now purs Thatcher's company for every penny that is due taxpayers, money which, evidently, Mr. Th company is refusing to acknowledge is due.

Let me make this clear. The fact that the Secr State and Mr. Thatcher are on first-name terms d necessarily mean that the Secretary of State wo inhibited from dealing with that matter. After Secretary of State writes to me quite frequently. I me Leo. I am bound to say that when I send copie letters to my constituents, I hope that they do misinterpret that as to imagine that I have any fri with the Secretary of State. However, we know relationship between the Secretary of State a Thatcher goes far beyond that. On 18 September 1 Secretary of State boasted to *The Times*:

"I have known Denis Thatcher for a long time. He is of mine. We meet quite frequently."

I do not know what is involved as we have not y told. I do not know whether hundreds or thousa millions, are involved. What I do know is that t we examine the issue, the more unnerving it becon the point of view of the taxpayers of Wales. After has been a haven for Conservative politicians out c from the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. J the former Member who represented Ashford.

Mr. Thatcher's role is far from clear. As *The T* it on 18 September 1981:

"The reason for the group appointing Mr. Thatcher i —Indeed it is.

"A spokesman said: 'He has wide business experie was thought this would be of benefit to IDC.' He Thatcher's duties covered general business and orga matters."

No doubt that includes letter writing.

With this background, clearly there are questions that have to be put to the Secretary of Sta much is involved? How much are the claims that a pursued? There are two claims. There is the clain the subcontractors with which IDC is joined, and t claim upon which the Secretary of State has sai is negotiating. We want to know how much claimed. Indeed, since if any of these cla compromised, suspicion is bound to loom o settlements, it is important at this stage that we k figures claimed so there can be no question again of derisory settlements, this time favouring Mr. Th company.

In view of the friendship declared betw Thatcher and the Secretary of State for Wales, I t we are entitled to ask what steps the Secretary o taking to distance himself from his friend. correspondence taken place on these issues bet

Secretary of State for Wales and Mr. Thatcher since that last publicised and ill-fated leak in the correspondence about IDC at that time? Is the Secretary of State for Wales still meeting his friend frequently, as he was?

Mr. D. E. Thomas: In the case of this much publicised event in the constituency of Meirionnydd, I remind the House that relevant essential parts of the Welsh Office file are still missing.

Mr. Abse: These facts, if such are the facts, only add to the aura of suspicion with which these matters are surrounded and only make it more necessary that we should be given full, clear and not diffident explanations now.

Has the Secretary of State for Wales, because of this relationship, considered whether it is right that he should use his offices to endeavour to obtain a settlement? If he has, has he failed? Does he intend to use his private links to meet Mr. Thatcher privately and, if so, how does he intend to ensure that any settlement, which may well be genuine, is seen to be in the interests of the taxpayers and not in the interests of Thatcher's company? There is clearly need for full clarification from the Secretary of State of how he sees the position and how he intends to deal with it now that Denis Thatcher's association with this company has led to the position that the Secretary of State has had to issue against his boss's husband's company a writ, and is presently engaged in negotiation with that self-same company over what may well be a large sum.

The third and most important question that I put to the Secretary of State for Wales is this? Has he made representations to the Prime Minister pointing out how impossible his personal situation is in these claims because of her husband's association with this company? I, of course, do not know whether this association of Mr. Thatcher with the company is continuing. We know that it was in existence in 1982, and it appears still to be in existence. What we do know is that in no way, even if he had already left, would it be irrelevant to what I have been saying, since the claims arise in respect of work done between 1978 and 1982 when we know Mr. Thatcher's interest to have been in existence; and, short of full disclosure of the terms of his financial association, any detriment or profit arising to the companies out of that period would clearly affect Mr. Thatcher personally. It would of course assist in the future if we knew that Mr. Thatcher had broken his connection with those companies, but, as I said earlier, I am not encouraged to believe that that has happened. The Secretary of State perhaps can tell us—he must know. Will he tell us?

I am not suggesting that Mr. Thatcher, if he chooses to continue with his private commercial life while he is the Prime Minister's husband, does not have the right to do so. There may be many justifications for his motivation. After all, he may be feeling insecure. The election is a long way off. *[Interruption.]* The knives are out on the Tory Back Benches now and indeed Conservative Members may find it less droll if I remind them of one other reason why Mr. Thatcher may feel that he should continue in his commercial activities. We all remember—it may be recent enough for even the young fogeys on the Conservative Benches to remember——

Mr. Best: I would rather be a young fogey than an old fogey.

Mr. Abse: We all remember that in the early 1970s food shortages could have arisen had people panicked and purchased excessively. We all remember the example that the Prime Minister, as the then Secretary of State for Education, set. She was discovered to be a hoarder. Her unconvincing apologia for that shabby behaviour was:

> "With my husband facing retirement, I see the prices rising so one does lay in a quiet store of food and household things that one thinks one will need."

If it is within such a family domestic ambience that Mr. Thatcher is living, it may well be that he continues to feel sufficiently insecure that he must go out to work and, if he does so, we are in no position to criticise him. That is his right. However, whatever may be the motivation for his desire to continue in commercial life, I say that Caesar's husband is no ordinary man.

Mr. Best: Caesar was heterosexual. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Abse: Conservative Members will not be able to laugh this one off, as they will find. When the last incident took place, *The Times* carried an editorial about the "Dear Nick" letter containing comments with which I entirely agree. *The Times* said:

> "Ministers and MPs are rightly expected to make their business commitments public, and in some cases to lay them aside. Their husbands and wives are under no such obligation, and should not be; nor can they be expected to keep their business and political friendships in sealed compartments. Nevertheless, the power they may have behind the scenes can be considerable, and all the more formidable in that its extent is impossible to access from outside."

The editorial concluded, a conclusion with which I agree:

> "If ambiguous situations are to be avoided in the future, a little more care is needed than Mr. Thatcher has shown on this occasion."

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This squalid little smear has been well heralded. I should like to take the opportunity to say about four things to the hon. Gentleman. First, this contract was entered into in 1978 under the last Labour Government. Secondly, unlike the situation in the Heath hospital, when no effective action of any kind was taken during the period of the Labour Government to protect the interests of the taxpayer, on this occasion prompt and effective action was taken to protect the interest of the taxpayer arising from the errors in design and construction that occurred in the hospital. The work done by IDC is a small part of the total. The claim will be, and is being, vigorously pursued. I shall not hesitate to take legal action if that is necessary. A substantial offer has been made by the company, negotiations are taking place, and I shall report the outcome of them or the terms of the settlement fully to the House, and the House will be given full details.

Mr. Abse: The Secretary of State seems to be suggesting that I am querying the fact that the contract was given to IDC. I have never queried it in any way—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to intervene again.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has suggested so many squalid things in the course of his squalid speech that I am at least entitled to point out that this contract—as far as I know the only contract that the company has had in Wales—was placed at the time of the Labour Government.

Mr. Abse: I am not impugning the giving of the contract. The Secretary of State does not wish to recognise that I am saying that, in the light of what he did for IDC, he is in an impossible situation in negotiating this claim.

[Mr. Abse]

What is squalid about the matter is that, despite the advice and guidance of *The Times* and others in 1981, Mr. Thatcher still continues to co-operate in the work of a company that seeks public contracts. It is inappropriate that the Prime Minister's husband should be joined with a company that seeks contracts from Ministries. If the Secretary of State thinks that I am being squalid in identifying that problem, he should bear in mind that I am trying to identify a problem that could easily have been resolved if the Prime Minister had had the necessary tête à tête with her husband, and had removed him from that position.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Before the hon. Gentleman adds yet another squalid little smear to his now long list, may I say that I am not aware of the company seeking any contracts, at least from my Department. I repeat that the only contract, as far as I know, that the company has entered into in Wales — and I have answered a parliamentary question on this subject—was entered into under a Labour Government. That Government must answer for the circumstances in which they entered into contracts.

Mr. Abse: The Secretary of State is stubbornly and wilfully refusing to see the point. Judging by the example of that hospital, the company is obviously the sort of company that goes out—as it is entitled, in the normal course of events, to do—to seek public contracts from Ministries. I repeat that it is inappropriate that the man who acts as the consultant to that company should be the Prime Minister's husband. It is no use the Secretary of State trying to defend his friends by suggesting that even to query such matters is lesé majesté. That is no reason for him to suggest that any probing of the issue is squalid. His defence does not stand up, because he is not facing up to the constitutional position.

The Secretary of State said that he would monitor the situation carefully and that he would ensure that the matter was vigorously pursued. But how can he expect any credibility when everybody knows that no one is more subservient to the Prime Minister's policies? Everybody knows that he is the Prime Minister's representative in Wales, and that he is not the voice of Wales, representing Wales in the Cabinet. With his hubris, I doubt whether he understands how small his credibility is on this issue, particularly in view of the squalid manner in which he dealt with the University of Wales issue, and in view of the way in which, even in this matter, he attempted at the beginning of the probe to conceal from public knowledge the allegations that have been made.

I have had my say, and others outside will have their say. After the issues raised as a result of Mr. Thatcher's intervention over IDC Ltd, no one will be satisfied that there can be a fearless approach to the claims that are being waged against that company as long as those claims are in the Secretary of State's hands.

7.5 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): That interminable, irrelevant and distasteful speech was entirely characteristic of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse).

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Hardly honourable.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Indeed, perhaps "honourable" is stretching it a bit. I intend to be no less controversial than the hon. Gentleman, but I shall be a great deal Unlike him, I do not intend to deprive those v Opposition Members who have taken the trouble up to this debate of the opportunity to speak in i

This is a big day for those of us who have the to represent Welsh constituencies, and naturally to use it to draw attention to the matters that principal concern to them. In my own case, now threat to put Colwyn Bay power station on to day only—a threat that was causing the gravest concern to the people of Colwyn Bay, due to th residential homes for the elderly—has been lif constituents' principal concern extends well bey boundaries of the constituency. Their concern is at the decision of some teachers' unions to back t claim by action that can only damage the well-bei children in their charge, and that gives the chi appalling example, by the refusal to acknowledge higher than personal advantage.

I want, in this speech, to touch on the wider an issues which underlie the now crumbling miners That strike has been supported more fully in W rather in south Wales, than in any other part of the not even excluding Yorkshire. I shall be sayi pretty harsh things about the Labour party, whic out of this affair far worse than the leadership of th I want to be fair.

There are two things to be said in defence of t in south Wales. First, as far as the rank and file o miners are concerned, and as far as their leaders Wales are concerned, this is a strike to defend jobs it is only too horribly clear that more miners' job destroyed by the strike than were at risk from the closure proposals. But it is precisely because th unlike the teachers' antics, is a strike to defen and not always only one's own job—and is n strike for more pay, that it has until the last commanded such an extraordinary degree of su south Wales.

That brings me to the second point that I wish in support of the NUM in south Wales. Althou have been appalling individual acts of thu perhaps the worst in the entire country — I believe that intimidation has played a decisive maintaining the solidarity of the strike in south

The miners of south Wales believe, perhaps that they are fighting a battle to save their and the jobs, and to save the communities in which they they will fight to the end. Both as regards the which they pursue and as regards their chances o they are tragically, heroically, but excusably wr Labour party, in the half-hearted support that it to the strike, is knowingly, cravenly, and ine wrong. Labour Members know perfectly well uneconomic pits push up the price of coal so as the cost of heating for old people, and the cost for industry, much higher than it need be. They the money and the men poured into keeping those are not thereby available for developing pits with long-term future. They know that promising new such as oil from coal are being starved of fun drain of resources to keep these uneconomic pit

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the hon. Gentleman on that very point?

Sir Anthony Meyer: No, I will not.

They know that it is vital for the future of Wales to keep moving steadily away from dependence on traditional industries into new patterns of economic activity of the sort of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales spoke with such hope and which the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) acknowledged. New patterns of economic activity will create greater wealth and provide better jobs. Labour Members know that the coal strike is a tragic and mistaken attempt to arrest this essential process of change.

In short, Labour Members know better than anyone else about the path of self-destruction along which the miners are being led. Worse still, they know why the miners are being led along that path. They know that Arthur Scargill brought about the strike and kept it alive for purely political reasons; to try to destroy by direct action a Government who cannot be destroyed by constitutional means. Every Labour Member knows—every one of them says, in private, of course—that Arthur Scargill represents as great a threat to the Labour party as he does to the coal industry. He is no threat to my party. Indeed, he is our most handy weapon since General Galtieri.

Is there a Labour Member who will dare to say in public what every one of them says in private? Even now, with the big, brave bulk of Mr. Norman Willis to shelter behind, Labour Members dare not speak out lest they spoil their chances of reselection. Let them remember that they will not be reselected by being cowardly and running away. I can speak with some experience about that.

In north Wales, Nottinghamshire and elsewhere, some miners have continued working throughout the dispute. Others have had the sense to realise that they are being led to disaster and they have returned to work. They are all members of the National Union of Mineworkers. They have all scrupulously obeyed the overtime ban. Most of them, despite all that has happened, are still loyal supporters of the Labour party. Which Labour Member has stood up for them?

The hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside and for Wrexham (Dr. Marek)—the latter has not honoured us with his presence today—pride themselves on being great champions of their constituents. When did either of them last publicly salute the courage and good sense of the many hundreds of their constituents who are union members and Labour party members and who are working at Point of Ayr or Bersham?

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) likes to pose as the champion of the steelworkers of Llanwern. He has not had much to say about the achievements of those steelworkers in keeping their plant going and maintaining production despite all the efforts of NUM leaders to close it down.

What about those two exhausted volcanoes, the right hon. Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan)? What about the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)? What have they done to help the miners of south Wales get off the hook on which they have been impaled by Mr. Scargill's revolutionary scheming? I know that those three wily old birds know what needed to be done.

And then there is the Duke of Plaza Toro himself, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, who is leading his army, as ever, safely from behind. He, more than any one else, knows that, so long as the party that he is supposed to be leading continues following Mr. Scargill's seductive piping, his chances of getting to Downing street are zero.

We know that the right hon. Member for Islwyn condemns violence. Indeed, he abhors violence. When some of us were beginning to hope that he was growing a backbone and might screw himself up to denounce Mr. Scargill's connivance at violence—we all love the right hon. Gentleman dearly—he explained that the violence which really bothered him was that of policemen trying to uphold the law. There is not much chance of that right hon. Gentleman giving the miners a brave lead back to the path of sanity.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that I am no uncritical supporter of the Government. I am especially unhappy about the sour relations which they have allowed, and on occasions seem positively to have encouraged, between central Government and local government. However, I must acknowledge that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has at least tempered bad policy with firm and clear administration.

I am more profoundly unhappy about the conscious refusal of some Ministers to call on latent feelings of national solidarity which would make the prosperous south-east more sharply aware of the very different state of affairs in Wales and in the north of England, or which would make those lucky enough to have a good job—perhaps their wives are in good jobs as well—more ready to accept sacrifices if that would help those who are trying desperately to find employment.

Over and above this, I know something of greater importance. There is no future for Wales and no future for Britain unless we make our industries competitive. There is no world system of supplementary benefit to keep an impoverished Britain from starvation. There is no world subsidy to keep open the Great Britannia mine when it is no longer economic. It is this Government, with all their harshness, clumsiness and all too frequent incompetence, who have the guts to take the tough decisions. The Labour party, for all its professed solicitude for the poor and the unemployed, does not have the courage, when the chips are down, to take any decisions which might upset its own extremist supporters.

The Labour party has done nothing to help the miners in their agony. It will have no contribution to make to the process of reconciliation, which must surely begin now, even before the final convulsions of the strike, to bring peace to our strife-torn communities, peace between those who have been striking and those who have been working.

I hope to God that the party and the Government which I support can now find restraint, generosity and vision to match the courage and resolution which they have shown in the past 12 months.

7.18 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): We are all well aware that this debate is held traditionally to mark St. David's day. I shall not celebrate, because we in Wales have little to celebrate on this day. Over the past months and years we have witnessed a most savage attack on our institutions, our industries and our way of life by a Tory Government who resolutely refuse to admit that their policies are damaging the fabric of Welsh life. At a time of high unemployment, those in government have removed the development status of vulnerable areas in various parts of Wales. They have

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caused the rundown of major industries without replacing jobs or making adequate provision for those who have found themselves on the dole.

The Government have forced cuts in primary and secondary schools and have threatened the well-being of our institutes of higher education. Even now, they are planning to cut our research establishments and to centralise Government Departments. I was told at the end of January that the Government contemplate making cuts of up to £30 million within research establishments in Britain. I have been told that that will mean that 1,000 employees in various institutions and agricultural research stations throughout Britain will be made redundant and that many stations will be closed.

The Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), will reply on behalf of the Government at the conclusion of the debate. He knows that we are proud in Ceredigion and Pembroke, North of the Welsh plant breeding station at Gogerddan, Aberystwyth. I wonder whether he will say that the future of the establishment will be secure and that he will do everything in his power to ensure that the world-renowned establishment in Ceredigion will remain intact.

With the Transport Bill, the Government are threatening to disrupt the whole structure of public transport in Wales. I have been in touch with district and county councils in Wales and the response from them is entirely hostile to the Government's plans. They express great concern about the utter chaos that will result from deregulating bus operations, and they fear that standards of safety will fall drastically. Rural areas in particular will suffer as cross-subsidisation will no longer keep non-profitable routes going.

I have often criticised the agriculture policies of the Government and their mishandling of the quota system for milk producers. Those policies have caused great hardship in some areas and, as I have said before, too little has been done too late to help agriculture in Wales through this difficult period.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State has left the Chamber, because I wish to make a personal appeal to him, one that he has refused on many occasions to heed from Opposition Members. As the right hon. Gentleman has full responsibility for agriculture in Wales, I urge him to go to Brussels on behalf of our farmers, in particular our dairy farmers. Even if he is not successful in his deliberations this year, the dairy farmers of Wales will be complimentary to him, for he will have tried to defend their rights.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not shake his head every time we ask him to go to Brussels. He is duty bound, in his role as Secretary of State for Wales—being responsible for agriculture—to go to Brussels now and then to defend the rights of those who are in dire trouble.

Many people have complimented the Government on the outgoers scheme. I do not believe that it is working well. At the end of the day we shall have about 300 fewer small dairy producers in Wales. It is a shame that we should be getting rid of small producers—dairy farmers with fewer than 40 cows—to ensure that other small producers in Wales may remain in business.

I am wondering what advice the Welsh Office gave to farmers who accepted the outgoers scheme. I am sure that many of them now regret having signed on the dotte as their little farms, without milk quotas, are worth less now than they were 12 months ago. No real was given to them. It is a pity that so many of the left the industry. That is why I appeal yet again Secretary of State to go to Brussels on their behal

Many dairy farmers who bought their farms in 19 in dire financial trouble. Those young people dec expand. They heeded the advice of the Gover Those who bought in 1983 and who do not have have large financial commitments to the banks. I an that many small dairy farmers in Wales will go ba having been persuaded by the Government and the to expand their smallholdings. I am worried o behalf, especially those families with children. Fo of them there is no alternative but to sell up and at the same time becoming bankrupt.

Agriculture and tourism have become the two industries in Wales. Tourism is important not only economy but to the community. In many areas, tou the lifeblood of the community, providing a livelih the shops, garages, pubs and other services. In speaking communities it is helping to curta depopulation by boosting the local economy, ensuring the survival of the Welsh language and

Tourism can successfully be linked with agri opportunities. In these days of changing ec fortunes, it is reassuring to have a supplementary to the main farming activity. The growth of farm is one of the big success stories of rural Wales. research shows that there are about 6,000 agri holdings in Wales engaged in some tourism ent There are about 1,250 farm guest houses pr accommodation and meals. In many cases, tourism to subsidise the traditional types of agricultural a

A feature to have emerged clearly in recent yea increasing professionalism of all those involved tourism. Marketing is becoming more profession the formation of group marketing co-operatives introduction of central booking facilities.

The Wales Tourist Board has done excellent recent years. The current agriculture policies being to Wales are not creating jobs. Indeed, confic agriculture is at its lowest ebb since the war. I h by helping those engaged in the tourist industry also helping those engaged in agriculture.

Today, the day before St. David's day, is a occasion on which to press the Secretary of Stat intentions about the future of Wales as a nation. consider that Wales is a nation with proble peculiarities that place it apart from the rest of th Kingdom? Or is he content to regard it as just region of the United Kingdom?

Does he have any plans for devolved govern Wales? It has been amply illustrated during the li this Administration that centralised governme Westminster has failed to help Wales and that the have befallen us are due largely to the mismanag politicians, far away from the Welsh borders, w no conception of the problems further north than and further west than Reading.

It is essential that we look once again at the p of a Welsh assembly that would bring power clos people of Wales and give them a measure of con their destiny. I am sure that, when he replies to th the Minister will refer to what happened on 1 Ma

when, he will say, the Welsh people voted overwhelmingly against devolution. But they did not vote against the principle. They voted against the proposals. The principle still stands that we should have our own assembly to look after the interests of the Welsh people.

Has the Secretary of State any plans to support further the Welsh language and the culture of Wales? I have in mind the introduction of a new Welsh language measure to bring legislation up to date, to suit the present situation in Wales and safeguard the future of the language. Is he in favour of the principle of bilingual schooling throughout Wales and will he support wholeheartedly the movement that has been set up to extend Welsh language education? Is he in favour of the independent authority for the development of Welsh language education?

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): While the hon. Gentleman is on the subject of bilingual schools, will he impress upon Ministers the need for extra finance in order to carry children from outside catchment areas to the schools, because there are huge areas of Wales that do not fit within any particular catchment area?

Mr. Howells: I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas). He has stated the facts as he sees them in Carmarthen and I hope that the Under-Secretary will listen to his plea, which is genuine and sincere.

Finally, may I ask the Secretary of State whether he has taken any action since my early-day motion of last year, which called for St. David's day to be declared a public holiday so that the people of Wales may be able to pay a tribute to the memory of their patron saint and renew their commitment to Wales and its future. Here we are on the eve of St. David's day and I am afraid that 12 months from now, on the eve of St. David's day 1986, the unemployment figure in Wales will have risen and very little will have been done to save the language, the culture and the historic institutions that belong to us as a nation.

7.31 pm

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): On the eve of St. David's day, what pathetic, appalling, synthetic speeches have been made by the Opposition so far. I except the last speaker, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), and I agree with him that the Welsh heritage, culture, tradition and education should be preserved, if that is what the people of Wales wish. Every nation is entitled to its history and tradition and everything that goes with them.

I was appalled to hear the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) saying absolutely nothing about Wales, Welsh culture, Welsh history, the Welsh language or the Welsh economy, but merely talking about Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Thatcher, and credibility. Let me say to the hon. Gentleman, who is now absent, that the credibility of the present Secretary of State for Wales is very high indeed in the Principality. I shall introduce some records about education, the economy, transport, and social structure, grants, housing and many other things that will show how much our present Secretary of State has contributed to Wales in comparison with previous Secretaries of State under Labour Governments.

Strikes, mining communities and mining leaders have been mentioned. How regrettable, appalling and, indeed, unethical it is for Labour Members always to attack the police, their behaviour and their obstruction, but never to attack the behaviour of the pickets and of what I would call the apparatchiks within the NUM and on the pickets lines. Nobody on the Labour Benches has mentioned, in the past or this afternoon—nor will they mention in the future—the behaviour of the pickets in south Wales and the tragedy that occurred when an innocent taxi driver was killed taking a miner to work, a miner who wanted to earn his livelihood to keep his family. That was the cruel killing of an innocent man.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a matter which is the subject of a murder charge. Is it proper for even this Chair to allow that sort of innuendo and that sort of prejudicial material to be spoken about in the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I do not think that this matter is sub judice. If it is, the hon. Gentleman must not refer to it.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This particular case is now before the courts; it has been referred to a Crown court.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that this case is sub judice, in which case it is out of order for the hon. Gentleman to refer to it.

Mr. Terlezki: I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if I have to withdraw, I will do so.

A great deal has also been said about the leader of the NUM—Scargill. That man, who deceived his members, the people of this country and the world, thought that he was the king of the miners. He is not. He never will be anything but a pathetic political Marxist, having helped to lose millions of tonnes of Welsh coal for export and approximately £10,000 in wages for every miner in Wales. He is the most discredited man, nationally and internationally, in a civilised society and the industrial world. He has divided mining communities. He has instilled fear and hatred in the mining people of Wales through intimidation, which I am afraid will continue for many years to come. He deserves no help whatsoever from anybody, now or in the future.

Of course, in matters of the economy and expenditure there is always room for improvement and we must not be complacent about the Principality. I think that it is a matter of so far, so good, in the present circumstances. But Labour Members, with their synthetic rhetoric and crocodile tears are saying that more should be done. We certainly would like to do more. What they do not say is how much it is going to cost to do more. Is it £1 billion, £2 billion, £5 billion or £10 billion? Why do they not spell out the projects that they have in mind? If they wish them to be implemented, let them put a figure on them, then we shall know what we are talking about.

As it was in the past, so it will be in the future. Labour Members have done nothing good for Wales; they never did and they never will. Our electoral results prove the point. In 1963 there were only three Conservative Members for Wales. Now we have nearly a rugby team, and we shall have a full one.

A lot of statistics have been quoted by the Opposition in connection with housing, transport, WDA, tourism, education and, indeed, coal mining. I shall concentrate on some of those statistics and figures.

I was most encouraged by what the Secretary of State said about the redevelopment of Cardiff, South—the

[Mr. Terlezki]

docks area. This is wonderfully encouraging news, since it means that there will be some employment available for the people in Cardiff, West whom I have the honour and pleasure to represent in the House. I cannot wait to see the increased employment that will come to the Principality. I hope that it will rub off on my constituency. It is wonderful news. The £250 million project will mean job creation in the future. The Holiday Inn in Cardiff is adding to the number of bedrooms, which will make Cardiff more attractive for conferences and other events.

I regret to say that my constituency has many old council houses. More should be done by way of improvement grants for people living in Ely, Fairwater, Caerau, Canton and Riverside who need sanitation amenities inside their homes. The general standard of repair work needs to be improved.

Council tenants who have spent 30 or more years in their homes and paid rent have, in effect, bought their homes three or four times over. I believe that the councils should give them their houses. They should not spend taxpayers' and ratepayers' money on improvements, but should give the houses to the tenants who could then carry out their own improvements. I am sure that the tenants would be delighted if they were told that from tomorrow their houses would be theirs. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board.

Opposition Members quoted synthetic and pathetic figures on housing. I shall give the facts about housing expenditure and renovation grants in Wales. I hope that the Opposition will take note of the facts and be more accurate in future. Under a Labour Government in 1978-79, only £10·2 million was allocated for house renovation grants. Under the Conservative Government in 1983-84, £144·5 million was allocated. The Government have an excellent record and all credit goes to the Secretary of State for Wales for fighting hard to spend that money.

Between 1974-75 and 1978-79, the Labour Government spent £58 million on home improvement grants. The Conservative Government more than doubled that in 1983-84. We are proud of our record and Opposition Members should be ashamed of theirs.

A total of £5 million was allocated to 15 Welsh local authorities through an enveloping scheme in 1984-85. Between 1974 and 1978 only 2,713 local authority homes were sold to tenants in Wales. By the end of March 1982, 12,000 local authority homes had been sold under a Conservative Government. Opposition Members want to keep tenants in their tight-fisted hand so that they can direct them to do what they want them to do. They do not want tenants to have castles of their own and be proud to own them.

I want to give some facts on expenditure on roads in Wales. In 1977-78, only £55 million was spent on roads by the Labour Government. In 1982-83, the Conservative Government spent £120 million. Many road improvement schemes will begin before the end of next year, including expenditure of £216 million on the A55 covering 18·2 miles, £16·3 million on 8·5 miles of the A40 and £20·3 million on 8·6 miles of the A48. Work on the A483 will cost £51·75 million and will improve 15·7 miles of road. That is something of which the Conservative Government can be proud.

The Opposition have shed crocodile tears and spread scaremongering stories about the Severn bridge, which has hindered potential industries coming to Wales. They said that the bridge was unstable and was collapsing. Two years have passed, and the bridge is still standing. The Conservative manifesto pledged to strengthen and repair the Severn bridge to meet the requirements of modern traffic. The Government are committed to that and stand ready to begin building a second crossing when that is necessary. They will adhere to their pledge.

I am pleased to put certain statistics on the record about selective regional assistance. From July 1975 — *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members do not like statistics, they should not quote them—I will not repeat them. During the periods 1 July 1975 to 30 April 1979 and 1 May 1979 to 26 February 1985, the number of offers of selective regional assistance in south Wales alone were 46 and 149 respectively.

Factory allocations by the Welsh Development Agency have been at a record level for the past two financial years. Let me remind the Opposition of their record. In 1978-79 under Labour the space allocation was 1 million sq ft; as for new job promises, they were zero zero. In 1983-84 under the Conservative Government the space allocation was 1·59 million sq ft and new job promises were 6,100.

Mr. Geraint Howells *rose——*

Mr. Terlezki: I will not give way.

As for tourism, I am very proud of the tourist board, which is doing an excellent job in Wales. Over 90,000 jobs have been created in the tourist industry. We must look ahead. More jobs should be created in tourism because people now have much more leisure. We also need foreign currency. The income from tourism is about £500 million per annum. I hope it will not be too long before we can double that figure so that we can employ more people and show our beautiful Wales to more people from outside the United Kingdom.

In regard to education, under Labour from 1975-76 to 1979-80 there were 56,620 school leavers with no formal qualifications. Under the Conservatives from 1981 to 1983 the relevant figure was 25,930. That shows that we care about education and about the children. We have spent a record capital amount on education. Again, that is a record of which we are proud.

Enough has been said by the Opposition to convince me that no one will take any notice of them. For the sake of the Principality they should not keep on knocking their own country but should try to see how they can beautify it and help it. Members of Parliament represent people of all persuasions and colour. Those people need guidance; Opposition Members should not mislead them. Opposition Members should not discredit Wales and the people they represent. They should not have the audacity to stand up in this Chamber and criticise their own people and their own country.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I appeal for shorter speeches? We have had some very long speeches from both sides of the House. There are many right hon. and hon. Members who still hope to speak.

7.53 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I should have preferred to follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who has provoked me to intervene. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, who made the charges

that he did, has left the Chamber. He insulted all Members on this side of the House and the National Union of Mineworkers in Wales by suggesting that what we have advocated in this House throughout the dispute has been different from what we have said in the country. That is absolutely false, and he should know it.

We have sought throughout to get a decent, honourable settlement of the dispute. If our advice had been accepted, or if our warnings had been listened to, in the first few days or weeks of the dispute, there could have been a settlement then and the rest of the strike could have been avoided. As some hon. Members may remember, it was the Government who prevented the Department of Employment from taking action which might have avoided the strike in the first place. The Government said that they would not intervene. The claim of the Government, of the Secretary of State for Wales and of the Department of Employment was that they would not intervene. As we know, that claim was false. A committee was meeting all the time. We do not know whether the Secretary of State for Wales had any influence upon it.

During the early part of the dispute the Government were sitting back gloating over it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer even had the nerve to come to the House and say that it was a worthwhile investment. All through those weeks and months we were urging that there should be a proper negotiated settlement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), acting on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, sought to get negotiations going before many of the horrors and difficulties developed. Right from the beginning of the dispute all of my hon. Friends have been trying to get a negotiated settlement.

All the Welsh Labour MPs have been seeking from the beginning of the dispute right up to today to get a proper negotiated settlement. That is why we went to see the Secretary of State for Energy. The Secretary of State for Wales was there on that occasion. The church leaders in Wales had put forward reasonable proposals for a settlement. If the Secretary of State for Wales had been doing his duty he would have given support to those proposals, or at any rate would have sought to ensure that they were properly considered. When we saw the Secretary of State for Energy, he said that he did not want the strike to end with people being forced back to work because they could not keep their families together. He wanted a negotiated settlement.

The following day the Secretary of State for Energy saw representatives of the churches from Wales. They knew much more about both sides of the dispute than Ministers have ever tried to find out. They put forward proposals which should have won the backing of any Government who wanted a decent, honourable settlement, but the Government would not do anything about it. When the Secretary of State for Energy made some moves to try to get a settlement, and when NACODS tried to get a settlement, on each occasion the Prime Minister intervened and blocked it at the essential moment.

When the full story of the strike comes to be written, it will be shown that time and time again during the past 12 months there could have been a settlement if the Government had been doing their job properly. If they had tried, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East did, with the full backing of the Leader of the Opposition, the strike could have been settled. It is absolutely false for the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West to say that we have not acted consistently to try to get the dispute settled. No one bears a heavier responsibility than the Secretary of State for Wales. He should have lifted his finger at some point to try to ensure that there were decent negotiations.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that more than half the miners are back at work at Abertillery. Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Government should intervene to prevent the TUC from achieving a settlement?

Mr. Foot: The Government should have gone much further. They should have responded earlier to the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East. The Secretary of State dares to talk about the miners in my constituency who have shown courage, determination and comradeship. The right hon. Gentleman should just sit quietly on his backside, as he has done during the past 12 months. Of course, a number of miners in my constituency who have supported the strike are now going back to work. They are doing so not because they wish to see a breach in the ranks of the NUM but because of what they have had to bear. They owe nothing to the Conservative party. Throughout the dispute my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), have tried, in association with the NUM, to achieve an intelligent settlement.

The background to the strike is the economic situation, which the Secretary of State accepts. The right hon. Gentleman has shown deep complacency about the strike. Wales is facing the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s. Some years ago my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) presided over a Select Committee which inquired into problems in Wales. With unemployment increasing at such a pace, the Government should attempt by every means at their command to assist Wales, but instead, one door after another has been slammed. The Government's actions have prevented us from dealing with the problems. Instead of recognising the seriousness of the unemployment figures and the industrial crisis in Wales, the Government have repeatedly taken measures that add to our difficulties.

How dare the Secretary of State mention skillcentres? I can speak with some authority about skillcentres, because one of the first actions that my constituency faced after the 1979 election was the Government's decision to back the MSC's proposal to close a skillcentre. That skillcentre had played a notable part in bringing new industries to the region, and we were determined that it should not close. The Government said, "Close the skillcentre and let the people go to Pontllanfraith." They now propose to close the skillcentre at Pontllanfraith.

The people in my constituency said that they would maintain the skillcentre and that, if the Government would not provide the money necessary to maintain it, they would do so, even if that meant placing an extra burden on the rates. That skillcentre has been kept. Hundreds of jobs and scores of industrialists in my constituency have paid tribute to the contribution of skillcentres. A person has a much better chance of obtaining a job in Ebbw Vale because of the skillcentre. People in Pontllanfraith and Llanelli have a much better chance of getting a job if there are skillcentres there.

The Secretary of State says that he bears the responsibility for deciding whether closures should occur

[Mr. Foot]

and that he will not shuffle the decision on to the shoulders of the MSC but will ensure that training as good as that provided by a skillcentre is available. Skillcentres should be provided in Wales on a larger and more imaginative scale, and the idea of closing them is absurd. The proof can be seen in what we did in my constituency. We said, "If the Government will not do their job, we shall do it."

I can extend one note of congratulation to the Secretary of State. He was wise not to mention regional policy. He did not dare do so, because he has taken several millions of pounds from Wales, especially the special development areas, with his new form of regional policy. He threatens to take great resources from us, but we shall use every means in our power, just as we did with skillcentres, to circumvent the Government's proposals. It is no good the Secretary of State smirking as though he were clever in dealing with these matters. We had to fight to save the skillcentres, and we shall keep the regional assistance that he tries to take from us. The right hon. Gentleman should restore special development status and the moneys that go with it to parts of Wales.

The Government acknowledge that there must be special assistance for some areas where there are pit closures. Under the Government's policies there will certainly be large-scale pit closures in many parts of Wales. The Labour party, because it was the first party that had to deal with the problem in the steel industry, said, "We shall establish a system whereby the British steel industry has a special department to provide assistance to certain areas." This Government now say that they will do the same for the coal areas, and I hope that they will do so. I hope that they will provide this assistance, but not on a derisory scale. Initially, to provide for the most hard-hit pit areas, the Government said that they would spend £5 million throughout Britain. They have now increased the amount to £10 million, but that money could be spent successfully in my constituency alone. Most of my hon. Friends face the huge scale of this problem.

The Government should tell us that the scheme, under which £10 million will be provided, has been entirely overhauled and that increased funds will be available. It is no good the Secretary of State talking about the transformation of Wales, because the transformation in the parts of Wales that are most heavily hit is appalling. Month after month, year after year, there will be more closures. Shops are closing in the streets of Welsh towns. We have to fight against the same types of problems as those against which we fought during the 1920s and 1930s. Of course the valley towns will not give in. The Tories will not beat us today, any more than they were able to do before. We shall fight them at every turn.

In speaking as he did about the transformation of Wales, the Secretary of State showed that he has no idea of what is happening in many parts of Wales. On many grounds, the right hon. Gentleman is totally unfit for his job. That is why he should be cleared out of it. The Secretary of State should change the economic atmosphere in Wales and provide the backing and support for which the Labour party cries out.

8.8 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): During last year's Welsh day debate the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) said that I had made a bad-tempered speech. After the contribution by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I certainly cannot be in line for that bouquet tonight. It is sad that such a distinguished member of the Labour party could not summon up one word in support of working miners, such as those at Point of Ayr in my constituency, who have so bravely gone to work throughout the dispute. They are much more representative of the people than the right hon. Gentleman.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) said, this is an important day for Wales. His speech rose to the occasion. It was a noble speech. I have always been proud to be his parliamentary neighbour, and I am even more proud to be his neighbour tonight. As long as the Conservative party can accommodate independent-minded men like him, it will never be defeated by the Labour party, whose members' independence of mind is currently being squashed by reselection.

This is the major Welsh debate in the parliamentary year, and it is only right to focus on the central problem in Wales—unemployment. First, I should say that the Opposition have no monopoly of care and concern for the unemployed. My constituency is as hard hit as any; indeed, I believe only about half a dozen Conservative constituencies have higher unemployment than mine. I am fully aware of the tragedy. Perhaps I may quote the words of my fellow Scot, Thomas Carlyle:

> "There is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work . . . in idleness alone is there perpetual despair."

At my surgeries every weekend I meet that despair, and I know it and understand it as well as any Opposition Member.

The second point I wish to make is that, if the debate is to be balanced, we must have the whole picture. Opposition Members cannot be selective. It is extraordinary how amnesia seems to afflict Labour Members so easily, from the University of Wales hospital to unemployment. It is not that they wish to rewrite history; it is almost as though they want to erase it. It is as though they say to themselves, when their record fleetingly catches their attention, "Better by far we should forget and smile, than that we should remember and be sad." But we shall remind them constantly that they once had the responsibility of government, and they cannot get away from their share of responsibility. They were in office between 1974 and 1979, although I noticed that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)—I am sorry that he is not here now—said, no doubt with a slip of the tongue, that they left office in 1974. Would that they had.

In February 1974,there were 38,424 unemployed in Wales; in May 1979, the figure was 78,200. Yes, they doubled it. Their policies failed then, and the people of Wales are entitled to ask, as we are, "Why should policies that failed then work now?" Labour Members suffer not only from amnesia but from blindness—blindness to the good news, because every bit of good news is another nail in their political coffin, another blow to the lingering political hopes that the few of them here have. The rest are no doubt attending constituency reselection conferences.

Let the House hear some more of the good news we have already heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki). Since 1979, the number of Welsh businesses has increased by 13·5 per cent. That is good news. In 1975, there were 12 advance factory

allocations in Wales; in 1983, there were 456. That is good news. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) talked about the dramatic percentage of total selective financial assistance offers that had been made by this Government. In 1976, the Labour Government made 90 offers of selective financial assistance; in 1984, the figure was 232. That is good news.

When the Welsh Grand Committee debated regional policy as it affects Wales, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside asked the Secretary of State, as he did again today, why the Secretary of State for Scotland had so greatly outpaced my right hon. Friend in the sphere of electronics. He said, "They have silicon glen. Why can we not have silicon valley?" It has escaped his attention, and apparently that of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), that there is a silicon coastal strip in Wales. Scotland has 40,000 electronics jobs in 200 companies. Wales has 20,000 jobs in 150 companies and it is more than keeping pace with developments in Scotland.

The indigestion of Labour Members must be beginning to suffer from this surfeit of good news now, and they are looking a little tired. The last bit of good news that I shall inflict upon them concerns inward investment in Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was his usual modest self and used statistics only sparingly, but let me give more of them. The share of new projects funded by overseas companies in Wales in 1979 was 9·8 per cent; in 1984, it was 23·4 per cent.—a dramatic increase. In 1979, as a percentage of the United Kingdom total, the number of jobs created by those new projects in Wales was 6 per cent.; in 1984, it was 23·9 per cent. That is not good news; it is great news. It is greatly to the credit of the Welsh Office, Ministers and officials alike, that Wales, with only 5 per cent. of the population, should have 25 per cent. of all inward investment.

My right hon. Friend prefers me to keep quiet on this issue. I am speaking loudly this evening because 612 of our colleagues — the English, Irish and Scottish Members—are not in the Chamber and therefore cannot hear me. If they could hear me, they would be breathing down the back of his neck, and my right hon. Friend's Cabinet colleagues would be on top of him, too. I do not wish to inflict that on my right hon. Friend. He has enough problems, although not many from the Opposition. This is a great achievement, and it is set to accelerate— *[Interruption.]* I am glad to welcome the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to our midst. His learning process on Welsh affairs will continue as long as he listens obediently to my speech.

The Government's success in attracting inward investment is set to accelerate. Overseas company visits to Wales last year were up 78 per cent. on the year before. That is good news. No wonder that Opposition Members cannot bear it. The true picture is that the sun is shining through in Wales, except for the Labour party. All that we have from them, as my right hon. Friend said, are dirges. Today all that we have heard is doom and gloom. The speech of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside reminded me of the opening lines in Jan Morris's new book:

"Brooded over by mist . . . drizzled rather than storm-swept."

Labour Members have perpetuated this myth of Wales, denigrating the achievements of my right hon. and hon. Friends. That only damages our industrial reputation and drives away investors. That is not just irresponsible—it is much worse.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): As it is good news day, and the hon. Gentleman seems to be acting like an American evangelist, can he say whether he expects the current unemployment level of 180,000 to fall to below 150,000 at the end of this Parliament, and whether my constituency, which is by no means the worst for unemployment, will have fewer than 27 people chasing every job?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman will not tempt me into predicting levels of unemployment. All that I will say is that I shall do everything I can to reduce unemployment, and I am trying to do so. I know that one man can do only a little, but I hope that what all of us can do in our constituencies will help. However, I shall not be tempted into the statistics game, and the hon. Gentleman, who has followed me in debates previously, should know better.

Much the same criticism can be made of the Labour party's attacks on regional policy changes. They should know that 90 per cent. of the working population in Wales lives in the new assisted areas; that assistance is now linked far more to the creation of jobs, which is what the Welsh TUC called for. It was absurd for the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside to suggest in the Welsh Grand Committee that areas such as mine have been downgraded. They have not. They still have the highest level of grants.

When are we going to get that through to the hon. Gentleman and to other Opposition Members? That crucial point has been made not only by Ministers but by the chief executive of Clwyd county council, Mr. Mervyn Phillips, who is no great admirer of me or my party. It has also been made by the chief executive of Delyn borough council, who said that, as a result of the changes, the Delyn enterprise zone is now the

"most attractive industrial location in Wales."

It is true that £60 million has been saved by changes, but that sum has been more than counterbalanced—two and a half times counterbalanced — by the £140 million given back by the Government to industry in Wales as a result of the abolition of the national insurance surcharge —that iniquitous tax on jobs imposed by the Labour party.

Enterprise zones are a part of regional policy. But if the Labour party had its way, we would have no enterprise zones. During the previous Welsh Question Time, the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) was sceptical about the zones. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) speak up for enterprise zones. The Opposition Front Bench has greatly criticised them. In a former incarnation, the shadow Home Secretary said that he would have no more of them. While the Labour party in Parliament takes that view, its local councillors do not. Local councillors in areas where there are enterprise zones strongly support them. The Opposition had better change their views about them before we go to the country the next time around.

I speak for Delyn borough council tonight, even though it is a hung council. It is grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the £4·6 million so far invested in the enterprise zone. So far 260 jobs have been provided. That does not sound many, but when we consider that those jobs have been provided in a 1·5 acre site out of an enterprise zone of 190 acres it is a stupendous

[Mr. Raffan]

achievement. I pay tribute to council officials and all who have been involved in the Welsh Office and the WDA. The clearance of the derelict land and the infrastructure there is near completion. The enterprise zone is poised to take off. I welcome that wholeheartedly.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman has been fond of using quotations tonight. As he mentioned the infrastructure, will he tell me whether he agrees with this quotation from a recent survey on Wales in *The Economist:*

"It is the roads and rails within Wales between north and south and east and west that would disgrace a newly emerging African country."

Mr. Raffan: I read the profile in *The Economist*. I read a great many things in *The Economist*. How did it describe the Labour party's policies — "prehistoric and incoherent"? I think I quoted it in my speech last year. There were worse things about the Labour party than that, but I am in a charitable mood tonight. I should love to see improvements. The hon. Lady is in grave danger of extending my speech by tempting me into a prolonged discussion with the Government Front Bench about the Northop bypass. I shall not get on to that subject because it would probably finish off my right hon. Friend.

Of course we need to improve the roads and the railway system. We need communication from north to south. I agree with the hon. Lady. However, we must also find the money to pay for such developments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West said, that is the fact that the Opposition will never face.

It is true we are still seriously affected by the rundown of old industries. In the Welsh Grand Committee debate the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside spoke of "hundreds of redundancies" announced at Courtaulds in the Delyn area. It is not hundreds. I am glad today that he has done his homework. He came out with the statistic of 232.

Mr. Wardell: That is hundreds.

Mr. Raffan: That is an old statistic. If the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside had bothered to consult me, he would know that it is now less than 200. That is still far too many, but I pay tribute to the work of the trade union officials — for example, Jackie Jones, the chief shop steward of the TGWU. He is a good friend of mine, if not a political supporter. He has worked hard with his colleagues to reduce the number of redundancies.

The hon. Gentleman, in his speech in the Welsh Grand Committee, quoted a letter from the chief executive of Delyn borough council, Mr. John Packer, which said:

"My Council are particularly concerned that strenuous efforts made by Local Authorities and other Agencies in reclaiming land, building factories and attracting new industries to the area are nullified by the continuing rundown of existing industries". —[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 23 January 1985; c. 14.]

There was a clear implication in the hon. Gentleman's speech that the chief executive was criticising the Government. On behalf of the chief executive, I wish to make it clear that no such criticism was intended or implied. In fact, the chief executive has some difficulty in seeing how his letter could be interpreted in such a way. Let me quote him. He said:

"The rundown of old industries has taken place under Labour as well as Conservative Governments."

That is true. The largest redundancies at Courtaulds were under the previous Labour Government, in 1976 when there were 440 and in 1977 when there were 1,553. The chief executive continued:

"The rundown in the textile industry is due, of course, to external factors outside Government control."

That is true. The decline in the viscous fibre market was expected but it has been much steeper and more dramatic than anticipated. It has been largely due to the Chinese flooding the world market with low-priced cotton.

I wish to put on record what the letter was about, because the hon. Gentleman quoted it selectively. In the chief executive's words, it was about

"more help of the kind so very generously given by this Government in past years."

Whether the redundancies at Courtaulds are one or 200, the tragedy is the same. The shop stewards at Courtaulds know how strongly I feel about the matter and how I have worked with them. They have been kind enough to pay tribute to what I have been trying to do for the plant. I have had a long meeting with my right hon. Friend about Courtaulds, and three weeks ago I had a morning-long meeting with Courtaulds' chairman, Sir Christopher Hogg, and the chairman of its fibre division, Dr. Norman Wooding.

I should like to tell the House some more good news. Earlier this afternoon Delyn borough council issued a press release with my permission and that of Sir Christopher Hogg saying that as a result of our meeting negotiations had been initiated between Courtaulds and Delyn borough council for the transfer to Delyn borough council of a major portion of Courtaulds' No. 1 unit at Greenfield. The chief executive's press release stated:

"The transfer of No. 1 unit to the Borough Council will provide the opportunity of a major initiative to bring new jobs to the site by the clearance of some 18 acres for new industry and the utilisation of existing surplus buildings."

In my short time in the House, nothing has given me greater pleasure or delight than to help initiate this transfer. I should like to pay tribute to John Packer, Delyn's chief executive, and David Warburton of the land division of Courtaulds for so speedily and so efficiently carrying out those negotiations. David Warburton struggled up to north-east Wales two weeks ago in the worst weather. This transfer is more good news for the Opposition that they will find hard to take.

Last, and most certainly least, I come to the policies of the Labour party — last because, like my speech, they are near their end, and least because they are no longer relevant to the future of Wales. On 21 October last year the shadow Secretary of State unveiled a major economic survival plan for Wales. I was not sure whose survival was involved. Was it that of Wales or his? It was, of course, a pure coincidence that the plan was unveiled just four days before the shadow Cabinet elections. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the plan was designed to have an inflationary effect on his vote in those elections. That is not where the inflation would have ended. The policy, of course, was not costed or analysed, but then, as *The Times* said recently of the leader of the party — in this, if nothing else, Opposition Members follow the Leader faithfully —

"He is not renowned for interest in the nuts and bolts of policy."

The same is true of the shadow Secretary of State.

I can understand the Labour party's reluctance to have the policy costed because it calls for extra expenditure of

everything. We should all like that. There is to be extra capital investment in industry, a regional investment drive, the extension of RDGs to buttress existing jobs, more investment in the coal industry — it already amounts to £2 million a day, and I do not know how much more was being talked of — an extension of nursery education, an expansion of academic research and a blitz on housing expenditure—four times the amount that we are currently spending is to be spent over 15 years—and the electrification of the Crewe to Holyhead railway plus further new railway investment. It is fruit machine politics. We press the button, and if three lemons come up in a row we hit Barry's jackpot. The Labour party will carry no credibility with the people of Wales as long as it talks in that way.

I understand the Labour party's reluctance to have its policy costed. When I was a journalist I covered the by-election of the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and I remember questioning the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent at a press conference about Labour's alternative economic strategy and the Treasury model. He looked quizzically at me when I said "Treasury model" as if one of the Treasury's more nubile officials had suddenly appeared on page 3 of *The Sun*. When that alternative economic policy was put through the Treasury computer, it blew a fuse, and the same would happen with the policy put forward by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. "A policy to save Wales" is what the shadow spokesman on Wales called it. It would not save Wales; it would sink it.

The Opposition Front Bench resembles nothing so much as one of those old Hollywood film sets. From a distance, it might almost deceive the eye, but the nearer one gets, the more unreal it becomes, until one recognises it for what it is — one-dimensional and propped up somewhat precariously from the rear. I and my hon. Friends can afford sympathy for the hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside and for Newport, East. After all, they pose no threat to us. They are a living, almost joyous reminder of what the Labour party has become—a party in irreversible decline. Is the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) nodding in agreement? I thought he would hope to benefit from that.

We know what the Welsh people think of the Labour party. Some 20 years ago, it had 60 per cent. of the vote in Wales, but now it has only 37 per cent. Some 20 years ago, it had 32 out of the 36 seats, but now it has only 20 out of the 38 seats. Not only do we know what the Welsh people think of the Labour party; we know what its former leader thinks of it.

In the words of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx,

"today the Labour party hardly presents the image of the natural party of opposition."

8.31 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): The name of Saatchi and Saatchi comes to mind after the speech of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), because it did a wonderful job at the last election, with the help of an uncritical press. It helped to persuade the British people, and the people of Wales, that, given a further period of office, not only would the record low of the economy be put right, but services would be improved, with the added bonus that they would pay less for them because of tax cuts. These promises were made nearly two years ago.

Wherever I go in my constituency, people ask me why things are so bad and where the improved services are. There are no improved services for the families on supplementary benefit. DHSS staffing levels have been cut at a time when more people than ever before need help from local offices. There is no improved service for the homeless and young couples waiting for a home of their own. The home improvement and house building programmes have been cut and are to be cut again by restrictions on local authority capital spending. There is no improved Health Service because Government spending in this sector barely allows the NHS to stand still, let alone cope with more elderly patients and the use of improved techniques for better care. There is no improved education service, because rate capping and the cuts in the rate support grant have meant local authorities cutting to the bone, not only on the periphery of education, in transport and school trips, but on books and repairing school buildings.

People are concerned about the cuts in services in the wide-ranging and complicated sectors of welfare, housing, health and education. They find it difficult to pinpoint a sector and say that there should not be a cut there because they know that if the reduction is not enforced there, it will be made somewhere else. However, in one of their services they are facing a cut with which they can come to grips and which they want to prevent. They do not want to lose their sub-post offices. The postal service operates profitably without a subsidy from the Government, but last year the Government decreed that the Post Office should make a 4 per cent. profit on turnover for the financial year 1984-85.

As we know, the Government have no method of allowing for social benefit in the costings of the Post Office. The right price for the Post Office is one with a high profit margin, while the level of service and the social obligations to communities, which have traditionally been part of our Post Office, have gone by the board. The Post Office response to this demand has been its document, "The Post Office Counters Network: A strategy for the future". This document is nonsense and has very little relevance to the Post Office service which the people of Wales want or need. The strategy begins by explaining and showing how the British Post Office service is the best in the world in terms of access and the facilities provided, but by the time it gets to section 4 it is outlining ways to reduce a service which it describes as "above standard". In what other sector can Britain boast that it is the best in the world, and then use that as an excuse for making the service worse?

By 1987, the Post Office plans to serve the whole of Britain by 1,493 plush, posh Crown offices, all bristling with faceless new technology. It plans massive investment to move into the bank and building society business, where there is already tremendous competition. It plans to do this in the town and city centres, where there are already banks or building societies every three or four blocks. To pay for this misguided policy, it will close about 5 per cent. of the urban sub-post offices.

National savings and the National Girobank together make up 23 per cent. of Post Office business. These are the facilities which the Post Office wants to expand in city centres. However, common sense tells us that many people who use the Girobank do so because there are many outlets and they have a bank on their doorstep, in their local post office.

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

The mail service makes up 22 per cent. of Post Office business. DHSS payments make up 33 per cent. and this is the part of the service that matters. It matters to the people, because those collecting pensions and benefits are those who physically cannot get into town or who cannot afford the bus fare to go to collect their payments. They need a facility in their community, and a local service. This matters, or it should matter, to the Post Office, because if a local service is not available, these people will transfer their business to the very banks with which the Post Office seeks to compete. So much for the sense of the strategy.

Wales will suffer at least as much as other areas of Britain from the cut in the number of urban sub-post offices. However, Wales, apart from Cardiff, does not have a city with a population of more than 250,000. We do not have urban areas comparable to those of London, Birmingham or Manchester. Our urban sub-post offices are usually the second office in a town. In many cases they were the village post office before the town grew. These sub-post offices are very much part of the communities which are separate from the town and retain their own identity. The differentiation between "urban" and "rural" sub-post offices has little relevance to Wales. That is why the people of Wales are so annoyed at the cut in their services.

Merthyr Tydfil borough council, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is to be congratulated on its initiative in drawing together the campaign to oppose these closures and to redefine in Wales the status of urban sub-post offices. There is no doubt that these closures will cause hardship to many pensioners and great inconvenience to others, especially young mothers.

There is a further aspect of the Post Office strategy document that causes me great concern. I am referring to the code of practice which will be followed when a sub-post office is being considered for closure. The Post Office promises to take into account considerations such as the type of business done, whether a large number of pensions are paid, the difficulties that customers would face in getting to another office, whether there is a bus service and whether there are steep hills, the ability of nearby offices to absorb extra work and the likely future development of the area.

I have a sub-post office in my area, at Bolgoed road, Pontarddulais, where the code of practice has proved to be useless and has not been applied. Bolgoed road is used by many pensioners—nearly 100 of them have written to me. The alternative office is the main one in Pontarddulais. The Post Office has measured it as being 0·4 miles away, but it has not taken into account the fact that all the Bolgoed road business will go to Pontarddulais. It will not be split between two or more offices, and many people walk nearly 2 miles to get to Bolgoed road. There is no bus service. Bolgoed road is at the top of hilly Pontarddulais, and few pensioners will be able to walk down into town and back again. Those who can will swell existing queues at the Pontarddulais office — queues which existed before the DHSS strike. Moreover, there are plans to develop Pontarddulais, and an old people's complex is under construction, but still the office is to be closed. If the code of practice cannot be applied to th closure of Bolgoed road sub-post office, it is meaningles and the supposed consultations are a farce.

The Post Office should rewrite its document and rethin its strategy for Wales, especially in regard to urban sub post offices. The Government should actively encourag the Post Office to do so. If the Government cannot get righ the services that they provide in a small area such as pos offices, what hope is there that they will get right the leve of welfare, housing, health and education services?

8.42 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I strongl welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State strong and hopeful speech. We all congratulate him, h fellow Ministers and officials on the excellent level inward investment achieved for Wales in 1984. As 1983, Wales secured almost one quarter of all inwar investment in Britain. That is a most worthy achievemen I was also pleased that he announced that, subject to fin strings being tied up, he has concluded an £8·5 millio urban development grant framework for Tarmac for th development of south Cardiff. It is excellent that th project is progressing so well.

I should be depressed if I took too seriously the dism Johnnie approach which is too common in Wale especially among those who claim to represent Wales. good example is South Glamorgan county council. Ho can anything be achieved if, at every turn, the response to throw in one's hand? A negative stance can produ only negative results. That approach was shown up clear in the reply to a parliamentary question tabled by the ho Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to the effect that, fro July 1975 to May 1979, 39 offers of financial assistan were accepted and produced 2,000 jobs and that, sin 1979, 198 offers of assistance have been accepte producing 9,700 jobs.

The recent changes in regional assistance policy we also greeted with a negative attitude on the part of Sou Glamorgan county council. One would have imagined th a tax had been put on jobs. The Labour party knows th there used to be such a tax — the national insuran surcharge — which the Government abolished, th relieving Welsh industry of having to find £140 millio Following the changes in regional policy, Cardiff h intermediate status. That enables all new ventures to app for assistance here or from the Common Market. Only l weekend I had a letter from South Glamorgan cou council asking me to note that it is unhappy about mov to make further education more responsive to the needs training and to provide skills that are essential for the jo to combat unemployment. The council objects especia to the involvement of the Manpower Servic Commission, which is especially relevant in training a jobs. I am appalled at the council's apparent lack concern about unemployment.

It is time that more people adopted a positive approa such as some of us have already taken. Cardiff is a gr place to locate. We do not need to rely entirely on bribe to attract industry because we have too much going for already. We have good communications, ease of access all important markets, an excellent industrial relatio record, a beautiful city, pleasant countryside and forward-looking planning authority, which respo correctly to opportunities. Two examples of that are expansion of Amersham International and the new pl

for AB Electronics adjacent to the M4. We are a sunrise location, playing an increasingly important part in high technology.

Our forward-looking planning authority played a strong part in support of my right hon. Friend in securing the location of Chemical bank, which has brought many jobs and will bring even more. South Glamorgan county council would do well to emulate the capital city of Wales.

I should like to consider a local matter — the University Hospital of Wales. We all know that the Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation recently settled for £300,000 on condition that there be no publicity of that settlement. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for ensuring that all of the information about the settlement was brought out. By his statement of 12 February, he overturned the "no publicity" condition, despite threats of a suit being lodged against him by those who wanted to maintain the confidentiality. There is much to be worried about in the handling of the claim by WHTSO, which the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs ought to examine. The claim might come within the purview of the Public Accounts Committee, but its handling is of great public interest. The Select Committee on Welsh Affairs ought to consider how WHTSO acted and whether it acted in the spirit of public accountability.

Much of what happened in regard to the university hospital occurred before 1979 and questions about responsibility have already been asked. On the same day that my right hon. Friend made his statement, there was another in another place. It is ironic that the noble Lord who asked questions on behalf of the Labour party was none other than Lord Prys-Davies, who was the chairman of the Welsh hospital board.

It was to that board that the University Hospital was handed over in October 1970. The responsibilities of the Welsh hospital board were transferred to WHTSO on reorganisation in 1974.

I had intended to refer to that matter before the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) made what I can only describe, in the same way as my right hon. Friend, as a squalid speech on that matter. His speech was entirely designed to achieve headlines in tomorrow's papers in Wales, but it will present the journalists on the papers in Wales with tremendous difficulties. While they will find glaring headlines, they will find no content in his contribution today. It was a speech entirely filled with innuendo, rumour, gossip and guilt by association. I do not know what motivated the hon. Gentleman. I do not know whether it was his difficulties in achieving reselection. Nor do I know what odd words are being said in odd places, including around the House. I certainly do not know what odd words are being said in, say, Annie's Bar. But one odd thing has occurred to me. Recently I gave an interview on the subject of the University Hospital and the reporter put to me what I thought then was a peculiar question. I now see a peculiar coincidence in the matter of the other hospital where the contract was let under the Labour Government.

The reporter asked whether yet another attack was being made on the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who, as a junior Minister at the Welsh Office during the period until 1979 had responsibilities for health matters. I shall make no comment on the subject, as I am sure that he is well able to answer for himself in the matter. But in view of the fertile imagination of the hon. Member for Torfaen I wonder what Machiavellian actions are taking place. They are actions with which I do not want to become involved.

Instead, let me deal with a matter of particular local concern. South Glamorgan county council has proposed to sell off of school playing fields, in particular the Ton yn Ywen playing field in my constituency. South Glamorgan county council says that it is being instructed by the Government to sell that off. That is not correct. The county council has chosen to spend at a particular level and it is financing that spending by selling off land.

Naturally, many of my constituents have looked to the Welsh Office in the hope that it could act as a court of appeal in this matter. I realise that my right hon. Friend's responsibility in planning affairs is limited and certainly does not extend to a matter of purely local concern, with no strategic or other significant implications. I fully appreciated that when he announced last week that he could not call in that planning application. But it is understandable that my constituents look to the Welsh Office as a court of appeal.

An applicant putting forward a planning application may be turned down and he has the right to make appeal to the Welsh Office, but this does not apply to others who use public open spaces—sports clubs as well. Here we have a county council acting in complete disregard of the people. It can act as judge and jury and can profit substantially by turning land over to housing, giving itself planning permission and obviously increasing the worth of the land substantially. At the same time, it ignores an offer by the city council to preserve it as public open space.

In response to public concern, my right hon. Friend put a stop on that while he considered whether to call the matter in. However, the county council pressed on and the matter will now be settled irrevocably within a short time if it has not already been settled. I wrote to my right hon. Friend to suggest that the matter might be held up until after May but he correctly told me that that would not be a normal use of his powers. Many in south Glamorgan would ask what mandate the county council now has for acting in complete disregard of the people. If the matter had been delayed beyond May it would have allowed the electorate to make a judgment on the matter. There are important matters for us to consider and I am grateful for this opportunity to do so, and particularly to raise matters of local concern.

8.54 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) but I want to point out some facts. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) insisted that we should do that. In particular, let us look at the Government's public expenditure tables and at the fall in expenditure on housing. The figure for housing in Wales in 1979-80 was £206 million. That has dropped to a projected £130 million for 1987-88. Those are cash figures, not real terms figures. They are paralleled only by the massive drop in nationalised industries' external financing limit, which will fall from £37 million in 1979-80 to a projected £10 million in 1987-88. Not surprisingly, if we turn to the section on nationalised industries, we find that the cash limits for the National Coal Board are not yet determined. The public sector starts in Wales over the same period show a drop from 5,198 in 1971 to 1,150 in 1984. Those are the real facts of the Tory Government.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Let me complete the facts. The hon. Gentleman has quoted accurately the net figures. He will realise that gross housing expenditure is a great deal higher because of the proceeds from sales.

Mr. Thomas: I am also well aware that the Secretary of State has recently reduced the ability of local authorities to use those capital receipts for their own purposes.

Much of the debate has turned on the mining strike and I make no apology for concentrating on that. I only wish that some Conservative Members had followed the lead of the hon. Member for Clwd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) by talking of conciliation rather then continual conflict.

The Secretary of State has a grave responsibility to the people of Wales as a result of the stance that he has taken personally in the dispute. He assumed that it was his role to represent the Prime Minister and the chairman of the NCB in Wales. He took a personal hand in the so-called campaign to get miners back to work and made speeches along those lines. It is about time that he apologised to the House and to Wales for some of his speeches at that time. He should realise that he has been unable to defeat the strength and solidarity of the South Wales miners. He should have the courage of his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West to pay tribute to the community values that inspired that stand and solidarity.

The fact that the right hon. Gentleman will not intervene now to do that shows that he cannot take his defeat gracefully. He must realise that the dispute has been a personal defeat for him. Not only did he take the Prime Minister's side and denigrate Welsh miners and their families but he compared the men in South Wales with people involved in terrorism. He made that speech in Cardiff and I gave him the opportunity during Welsh questions to withdraw those remarks and he refused to do so. I give him the opportunity now.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: That is pure invention. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the text of my speech—I shall send him a copy—he will discover that, and I hope that he will withdraw that remark.

Mr. Thomas: I read the right hon. Gentleman's speech at the time. I also read press reports and had conversations with Conservatives who were present at the dinner and who were equally appalled. I shall not withdraw the remarks. He has a personal obligation to make his position clear and to say that he supports the conciliation attempts of his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West.

I shall be brief, as I know that other colleagues wish to intervene before the wind-up speeches. I should like to refer to the central issue of the dispute, which will not go away, however the dispute is resolved — the central argument about the economics of energy policy, to which Conservative Members, yet again, have failed to address themselves. I refer in particular to the major report on the coal industry in Wales, produced by the economists and social historians at Aberystwyth — Tony Cutler, Colin Haslam, John Williams and Karel Williams. It is entitled, "Aberystwyth Report on Coal". I ask the Secretary of State and his officials to find time to read it because I am sure that they will find within it a critique of Government policy that it might be a useful exercise for them to read. If there are Clive Pontings in the Welsh Office, that might inspire them.

The conclusions to that report make it clear that the NCB accounts do not provide a basis for the definition of an economic pit or an economic coal industry. Indeed, follows on the calculations made in the Andrew C report and the studies published in *Accountant's Maga* showing the inadequate basis of the NCB's accountar In particular the report stresses the argument that, it is failure to invest that makes uneconomic pits. I spoke al that in the coal debate recently, and I do not want to re those remarks. However, it is important that we sh make the one clear argument that, if the Government v to implement the policies of the European Community environmental conservation, particularly the policies clean coal, Welsh coal and Scottish coal, which is cle in its sulphur content, would immediately become m more economic.

Indeed, economists such as Dr. Mark Barret, from Open University energy research group, have stressed difference in value per tonne of coal that would result f the imposition of sulphur emission controls on pc stations in the United Kingdom. That is one clear exar of the way in which the economics of an extrac industry and electricity generation are not the same as economics of the production of commodities manufacturing branch plants. I only wish Conservative Members applied the same argument tc economics of energy policy that they are prepared to a to the economics of farming, another extractive indu

There is no such thing as a free market in energy. Secretary of State lectures the Welsh miners by compa them with steel workers. Those are two entirely diffe industries. In Britain we have reserves of coal to mai an energy policy for well over 250 years, yet Government are going for the nuclear power option, w is much more expensive and environmentally unac able. That is the Government's decision because they keen to defeat the forces that have massed in the NUM among its supporters.

Therefore, there is no such thing as a free mark energy. The NCB has been used to subsidise the Ce Electricity Generating Board over the years. The deci to centralise coal production in high investment areas led to an economics that denies the viability of the called peripheral coalfields in Durham and south W Because of that, the basic question about the natu uneconomic pits cannot be dealt with in terms of unit of individual pits allocated in order to calculate viability of each pit. The economics of the coal ind has to take into account the overall economics of er policy. The Government's failure to do that and willingness to treat coal as if it were another comm demonstrates a long-term failure in planning. Of co one does not expect long-term planning from Government. We can see clearly a failure to take ac of the real issues, and rather than addressing thems to economic policy, the Government have determine the destruction of the communities of south Wales.

Of course, the Government will have to pay a high for that, because it is the Government themselves have adopted that course of total confrontation wit south Wales mining communities. At the same time Tory party has been trying to polish up its image in parts of Wales as the party that distributes largesse tc and specific client groups in Welsh education. How the people of Wales are not conned by that strategy basis of Wales is a sound economy that is controlle the benefit of the community of Wales. The Secreta State is not interested in developing such an econom

is interested only in ensuring that the Tory party can achieve additional support from certain sections of the Welsh population while destroying the basis of Welsh democracy as represented by the NUM and the coalfield communities. However, what the Secretary of State has succeeded in doing in the dispute is to create in Wales new forces of extra-parliamentary opposition, which will survive his period of office as Secretary of State. I refer to the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities, which has the support of the Labour party in Wales, Plaid Cymru, the Communist party, the churches, language groups, and trade unions beyond the coal industry—a broad spectrum of radical opinion in Wales opposed to what the Tory Government are doing to Welsh communities.

As a result of the way in which the Secretary of State has declared class war upon the people of Wales and their communities, we shall respond in specific terms. We shall defend our communities. We shall defend the values of solidarity and culture that are part of those communities. The communities of Wales will triumph over his rule as governor-general in Wales.

9.5 pm

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): I think that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will find that his rainbow coalition of forces will have as much effect as the democratic presidential candidate found it to have last year in the United States. The right hon. Gentleman served the people of Wales ill, as leader of his party claiming national leadership and helping to lead them to believe that strikers could triumph over the democratically elected Government of this country. They could not triumph, and they will not do so.

The right hon. Member had a bit of a cheek to suggest that this Government failed to negotiate with the unnegotiable Mr. Scargill in the autumn, when he was in full cry and his members were terrorising miners who wanted to work, especially as they now reject, at the very last gasp, negotiations that have been worked out by the TUC. If they reject those negotiations now, what on earth would they have been doing accepting anything from this Government in November or October of last year? That was a pipe dream, just as the right hon. Gentleman's leadership of his party at the last election was a pipe dream. Those Opposition Members who had to fight on the manifesto—which was, I think, described by a fairly well-known right hon. Gentleman as the longest suicide note in political history—will remember that it called for £35,000 million or £40,000 million in extra public expenditure.

We did not hear that today from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). He just wanted a little more expenditure—just the odd few thousand more—but not £35,000 million or £40,000 million. But of course the hon. Gentleman had to stand by that manifesto at the time. The hon. Member knows that breaking off from the EEC would be suicide, but the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent did not seem to know that. It is the curse of the lack of standardisation in our products and services that is dragging down Europe. Unemployment, and the slow disregard of Europe in the face of Asia and north America, is a European problem. We must seek standardisation, and it is the Government's policy to knock down those internal barriers to the Common Market in order to create a real Common Market that will create the jobs that we need.

At present, jobs are going to the bigger international economic units and not to the European countries. If the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent really believes in the medicine that he sought to give the country at the last election, why does he not look to President Mitterrand, who sold it with much more panache to the people of France, but who had to turn smartly on his heels in a 180 degree turn? President Mitterrand is now pursuing monetarism and showing a regard for economic reality and discipline in the market that puts even this country and Government in the shade. That was French pragmatism facing up to reality in a way that I am afraid Opposition Members have signally failed to do.

Incidentally, like my hon. Friends, I welcome the Tarmac announcement today. I know that the development of south Cardiff is dear to the heart of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and I and the people of Cardiff thank him for it. Many things point in the right direction. Investment is now running at a record level. That will mean jobs in the future. We do not hear quite so much about the need for investment, of course, now that it is high. Inflation is being held, but with the fall in the pound it will be even more important to keep down the rise in labour costs, as otherwise inflation will increase.

Exports are rising faster than the growth in imports, and the fall in the pound means that the increased export volume should outstrip the growth in imports for the first time since 1977. Our efforts to bring industry to Britain, and in particular to Wales, should be helped by the cheaper pound, especially with regard to America. The ending of the miners' strike will have a signal effect on the economy in all sorts of ways. Last year the strike dragged down our growth rate by at least two clear points. Presumably that rate will rise by an extra two points once the strike is ended. That will begin to restore jobs and will provide people in Wales and in the rest of the country with an opportunity. Oil imports will fall. The strike has also affected electricity. The British Steel Corporation and, we hope, the railways will be assisted by the ending of the strike. In addition, small shops will be helped, and the money diverted in various ways by councils will now be put into the proper coffers or left to fructify in the pockets of local people.

All those things should flow from the ending of the miners' strike, and all of them have been damaged by it. We hope that interest rates will begin to fall, but responsibility for them rests partly with the United States. I hope that Opposition Members will not go off again this year and support the teachers' strike, which is wilfully damaging youngsters in schools in Wales. Opposition Members know perfectly well, just as the Labour chairman of the south Glamorgan education committee knows, that if the employers pay more than is on offer at the moment, the money will come out of the allocation for school books, equipment and other materials needed by the pupils.

I should like to have said more about the youth training scheme. I wish next to mention some of the points which the *Economist* article brought to the fore and which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) mentioned. *The Economist* said of Wales:

"To many industrialists it is a place where fierce unionised workers live in small terraced houses alongside derelict steelworks and slag heaps."

[Mr. Ian Grist]

That is precisely the image that Opposition Members always like to paint. If that image has got out, it is because they help to push it out year by year. *The Economist* continues:

"Never mind that these are gross calumnies. So long as they are widely believed, the country will not attract sufficient investment from manufacturers, financiers and the tourist industry.

The first thing that Opposition Members can do to help Wales is to stop painting this picture.

Praise was given to the Welsh Development Agency for helping to bring Japanese industry to Wales by drawing to its notice the other advantages in coming to Wales besides its regional policies, matters to which I always draw attention—our golf courses, theatres, beaches and the great beauty of the countryside, all the assets that we enjoy. *The Economist* says:

"Companies, especially hi-tech companies"—

by inference, the young people in charge of them—

"in searching for a site are often now as interested in finding a nice place to live and work as they are in making money."

I hope that they make money as well. *The Economist* continues:

"So poor is Wales' quality of life image . . . that those who actually take a look at the place are bound to be pleasantly surprised."

That is another matter. We want to bring people into Wales. What better way than bringing them in as tourists in the first place? Only 3 or 4 per cent. of international tourists come to Wales, and we must increase that figure. We have to have better hotels. There is to be a Holiday Inn in Cardiff. We need more international sized hotels of first rate standard to begin to draw in international tourism. From tourism, one can begin to produce business as well. The twinning of towns should be advantageous in bringing in foreign industrialists.

The Economist puts its finger on another point concerning Cardiff:

"Cardiff is a fine city, large enough to be interesting, not so large that it is impersonal. Its St. David's Centre is one of the best anywhere. The city has good music . . . In a single month last year St. David's Hall advertised appearances by the BBC Concert Orchestra, the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra, the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, Van Morrison, Bob Hope, Segovia, the Commodores, Tom Paxton, Roberta Flack, the Everley Brothers, and the Band of the Welsh Guards."

One could perfectly well have added darts, the iron maiden and wrestling. Those are the things which help to bring people to Wales.

We are an attractive country and we have much to sell. If we sell ourselves properly, we will also get the jobs to go with it.

9.12 pm

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Exactly a month ago the Secretary of State for Wales issued an unprecedented press notice bitterly attacking the expenditure plans for his own home county of Dyfed. It was the action in my opinion of a panic-stricken and desperate person. The elections of May will soon be here. It is obvious that the Secretary of State has to bolster the flagging influence of his own constituency's ultra-Tory representation on the council. As a result of the Secretary of State's roughshod intervention, we could well, thank God, have a Left radical coalition majority on Dyfed county council after 2 May this year. The balance of opinion in that elected council has brought ab cautious response since the council came into be 1974, erring on the side of prudence rather than profl but even those most prudent people are now punished by the Secretary of State.

Dyfed has always attempted to strike the right ba but the present situation is that if it spends £1 abo penal target figure of £130 million the autho penalised £1·50. An extra £1·4 million for services that the ratepayer would have to pay £4 million. the financial balance of the madhouse because it central Exchequer and not the people of Dyfe receivers or the givers, who ultimately benefit.

The search for constant efficiency is there for all but the Secretary of State is dissatisfied and is dete that Dyfed services and staffing are to be undermine authority's expenditure next year is to be reduced target figure that the Secretary of State has set. It £3 million below that which the Welsh Office asses Dyfed needs to spend. Dyfed ratepayers know reductions of such magnitude will mean. Since Dyfed councillors, parents and electors generall become more uneasy and worried about the ef constant cuts. The cuts in the education service in have amounted to £9 million since 1979.

The Secretary of State accuses Dyfed—I qu press release—of

"distorting the facts and abrogating its responsibilities."

He advises Dyfed

"to avoid a confrontation course."

But Dyfed finds itself with a target figure that below that which the Welsh Office assesses Dyfed should be spending. The target is a full £3 millio that assessment.

The voters of Dyfed will be told in the May el exactly what reductions in services they will have if control of the council remains in the hands independents, who will have kow-towed to the bu tactics of the Welsh Office and its "I-know-best" a That attitude is constantly coming our way in Dyfe the Secretary of State.

The people of Dyfed know that the result of furt will be the closure of rural schools. We all know effect on communities when rural schools are These schools are the focal points of community Welsh Wales. Community care will suffer. We a how the Government have decided to close hospi to send patients out into the community, which is n prepared to receive them. Those who are sent o require mental care.

There has been a deterioration in the roa infrastructure of south-west Wales. We need goo and infrastructure if we are to bring jobs to south especially in the Teifi valley, which has an unempl rate of between 20 and 25 per cent.

We in Dyfed are not prepared to accept the bu tactics of the Secretary of State. When the ec committee meets on Tuesday next, I hope that reverse the county council's decision to impo amounting to £2 million in the education service that it will seek to maintain our standards of educ which we in Dyfed are proud, even though sometimes whether the Secretary of State shares o

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Bright.

9.18 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I hope that the few minutes available to me, Mr. Speaker, will be bright indeed, although I cannot claim to have that name. I shall not follow the path taken by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas). The hon. Gentleman is a nice man but it is unfortunate that he often speaks in a way that is as miserable as the way he sometimes looks. He must do himself a favour by trying to match the visage that he now presents to us—he bears a smile on his face—with some of the things that he says.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen talked about Health Service cuts. If he had taken the trouble to consider the facts, he would not have made those remarks. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) accuses the Government of being profligate. I suspect that that is an accusation that he will live to regret. However, he is right to say that their spending on the Health Service is profligate, as is their spending on welfare payments. The spending in both directions has increased dramatically under this Government. It is somewhat amusing when the hon. Gentleman talks about housing being the Government's Augean stables. The hon. Gentleman cuts an unlikely figure as Hercules.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside was right when he said that Wales needs jobs. He must understand that Wales is going through a change in its society as fundamental as the industrial revolution. Unfortunately, the Labour party cannot comprehend that. The Government have comprehended fully this change and they are taking the appropriate measures.

It is typical of the Labour party to talk about the massive shopping list of expenditure that it would have, without making any costings whatsoever. It is the shopping list of the man who knows that he will have to burgle the house next door before he can pay for any of the goods that he wants to buy.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside did not take the trouble to read a comment that was made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) shortly after the 1983 general election, when he attributed the defeat of the Labour party to its £17 billion unemployment package and added:

"It sounded too good to be true. What should have been our greatest advantage was turned into a drawback."

It was a drawback because nobody believed it, and nobody believes it now.

The hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside and for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) are the Owl and Pussycat of Welsh politics. They sit there, one hunched up spreading misery and gloom, eyes unblinking, the other wishing to claw like a pussycat at anything that he can grab hold of. If they really want to do a service for the people of Wales, they will sail away in their pea-green boat, because both they and their policies have no further relevance.

9.21 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): This annual Welsh day debate has turned into a sort of annual general meeting of hon. Members who represent Welsh constituencies. It is the time when we take stock of the economic state of our beloved homeland.

We had the usual fairy story from the Secretary of State, with ample reference to the closure of uneconomic pits. There was no mention of National Coal Board Enterprises, the vehicle which will allegedly provide new jobs in our mining communities. We should have been told whether there is to be a Welsh dimension to that organisation and what revenue will be available to it. The miners and their families will draw their own conclusion. It was left to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), in an eloquent speech, to develop that point.

I begin where we left off on 28 February 1984, when the Under-Secretary's first words were:

"A dark and gloomy Wales, heavily overcast by black economic clouds blown there by Government policy." —[*Official Report*, 28 February 1984; Vol. 55, c. 220.]

Admittedly, he was trying to ridicule the image of Wales portrayed by Labour Members, particularly in respect of what had been said about the effects of Government policies. But 12 months later we are entitled to ask the Government: where is the sunshine?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems to live in a world of his own. He believes that we are going through an economic boom. His contention reminds me of a song —I was a boy at the time—that Bing Crosby used to sing, "It's June in January." The hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) appreciates the contradiction. In a recent article in *Reformer*, the journal of the Tory Reform Group, he wrote:

"To be told that we are in the fourth year of recovery with unemployment at 3½ million is a definition of an economic boom unknown to me."

He is right.

Let us examine more closely the Welsh unemployment figures. In our annual Welsh day debate last year we were told that the number out of work in January 1984 was 174,707, or 16·3 per cent. By January 1985 it had risen to 185,529, or 17·4 per cent. Almost 11,000 more people had joined the dole queue, a sort of "Rake's Progress". By any logic, the dark clouds are hardly breaking.

When, in years gone by, there was high unemployment in Wales, people moved to other parts of the country. My mother's brothers, for example, moved to Birmingham. Others went to Slough, Oxford and elsewhere.

I am very glad that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has made such a wonderful recovery from the terrible Brighton bombing. He became famous for his advice to the unemployed to "get on their bikes". In present conditions this advice seems to me to be absurd. We all recognise that unemployment is now 3·5 million and, according to William Keagan, the economics editor of *The Observer*, in his article last Sunday, the vacancies are now 157,000 and there is a huge imbalance in the labour market. The country is simply crying out for new investment, which this Government are not prepared to sponsor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) outlined the sort of programme which a Labour Government would engage in to try to eradicate this problem. But even with those in work there is still a sort of uneasiness. People are looking nervously over their shoulders and wondering whether it will be their turn next — for the chop, that is. This is the hallmark of Thatcherism.

It could be argued, of course, that there are economic benefits when people are cowed in this way, but such benefits are only temporary. It is certainly no way to run the economy of an advanced industrial country in the closing years of the 20th century. Today, industry can be efficiently and effectively run only by co-operation and

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

consent. The Government have gone completely against principles of this sort. For example, they planned the confrontation with the miners.

There is no need to speculate about this; it is on record. We have the so-called Ridley report, the leak of which appeared in *The Economist* of 28 May 1978. I will put it on record once again:

"The group believes that the most likely battleground will be the coal industry. They would like a Thatcher Government to: *(a)* build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at the power stations; *(b)* make contingency plans for the import of coal; *(c)* encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move coal where necessary; *(d)* introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations as quickly as possible.

The group believes that the greatest deterrent to any strike would be 'to cut off the money supply to the strikers and make the union finance them'."

Finally it says:

"There should be a large, mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing. 'Good non-union drivers' should be recruited to cross picket lines with police protection."

These plans were laid well before Mr. Scargill came to power in the National Union of Mineworkers. The only fact that the document left out was that an American hatchet man was to be recruited, at extraordinary cost, to carry out the exercise. The Ridley report is an important social document. It will be recalled in south Wales for generations to come, long after all the twaddle about Caernarfon castle and malicious old maids has been forgotten.

I cannot do other than applaud the magnificent stand of the south Wales miners. Their loyalty, solidarity and dedication to their cause has been of the highest order. They have been fighting for their communities. They, as much as anyone, recognise that unemployment is the No. 1 problem and the greatest social evil facing Wales today.

What are the Government doing about that dreadful position? The traditional method of inducing new jobs to an area is regional aid. Yet the Government have recently taken a considered decision to cut regional aid by £60 million—money that is sorely needed in Wales. In the Welsh Grand Committee on 21 January, I said that a major international company was considering a major development in Newport, which would use new plant and new technology and employ 700 people. I received a report that the Secretary of State had made a derisory offer to that company and, ultimately, it said that if it was not more favourably treated the development would go to the Continent where the company already had other operations——

Mr. Raffan *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No. I heard enough from the hon. Gentleman earlier.

During Question Time in the House yesterday, and also during Welsh questions on 11 February, I raised the issue of the Honda motor company and the fact that it has acquired a 330-acre site in Swindon. Yesterday, the Minister tried to clothe the issue in secrecy. To add insult to injury, he more or less implied that he could not care less whether a Japanese company wanted to invest millions of pounds in Swindon. The Government have no concern for the regional imbalances in the British economy.

Surely the Secretary of State for Wales should be concerned about that matter. Will he tell us what part he has played in the Honda project and what efforts making in bringing such a project to Wales? I am w to hear from the right hon. Gentleman, and I willingly give way. He seems to have lost his tong

In just over two hours it will be 1 March, the na day of Wales. If Dewi Sant were to come back, he wish to continue his missionary endeavours. His would not be confined to Wales; he would be con about the rather more affluent communities in the east of England. However, he would first have to the south-east of England, and I do not know w would make of the masses of bollards on the bridge. We shall never know. They certainly give deplorable impression to visitors to Wales.

Nearly 18 months ago, in an Adjournment deb revealed the true state of the Severn bridge apparently the Government were trying to Subsequently the Secretary of State for Transport great play of the fact that £30 million was to be sp repairs and maintenance of the bridge. In answe parliamentary question last week the Minister of Department of Transport again talked about th million which was to be spent. In a corkscrew t answer he said that, since the bridge had opened, million had been spent on repairs and maintenanc bridge was opened in 1966 and a lot of money wa before we had the announcement about £33 millio

What is more, the Minister of State indicated t work would take another five years. This is a snail' which the Secretary of State tried to gloss ov afternoon. Does it mean that there is an attempt make too big a dent in the finances of the Departm Transport? In other words, are a few million pounds allocated for the work each year? This is not good e We are entitled to ask what the Secretary of State is to speed up vital work on this most important art Wales. Again I offer to give way to the Secretary if he wants to give an explanation, but he seems rath

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The problem of doing work is to keep the traffic flowing over the bridge. T of programme that the hon. Gentleman is adv would cause traffic jams that I should have thou would want to prevent.

Mr. Hughes: What I have complained about disastrous image of Wales that the bridge gives to v There are lane closures and traffic hold-ups from time. I live fairly close to the bridge and I have be to see it better than the Secretary of State.

Last Thursday, 21 February, there was interesting article in the *South Wales Argus* by its editor, Mr. Steve Hoselitz. He showed that consumers pay more for gas, electricity and water paid in the rest of Britain. Surely this is wrong whe is suffering from mass unemployment. We have r such unemployment in Wales for 50 years. It is wr public utilities, at the instigation of the Gove should cane people in this way. Again I ask the S of State what he is doing in the Cabinet to def interests of Wales.

As we approach our national day the dark clo getting ever blacker because of the policies being by the Government. There will be no sunshine fo while the Government remain in office. Towards of the second world war Sir Winston Churchill sai

he realised that Britain would be in an impoverished state when the war was over, that the future was full of foreboding and gloom. So it is with this Government. They have failed Wales, and they should get out.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): This is an historic occasion. This is probably the only time since the war that a Welsh day debate has ended with more Welsh Conservative Members present in the House than there are Labour Welsh Members. I wonder what Jim Griffiths, Nye Bevan and the great Labour stalwarts of the past would have made of that.

Listening to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) I could hardly believe that I was hearing an hon. Member who has had 25 new factory units built in his constituency since May 1979 with a further two units planned. He should be smiling, not frowning, at this generous Treasury Bench.

We all have our normal, individual, loving view of Wales, but in a debate such as this, of necessity, we must be highly selective and present a partial view only—partial especially in the political sense. I understand that the Opposition feel obliged to concentrate on the pimples on the fair face of the Principality—it is in their political interest to do so. The closer the leading spokesmen of the Opposition can get to the anchorite of Llanddewi Brefi's description of Wales after the death of Saint David, the happier they are. He said:

"And then was heard a cry arising from all, a wail and lamentation and weeping and people exclaiming 'Woe to us that the earth does not swallow us, that fire does not burn us: would that God would raise the sea over the land and cause the mountains to fall on us'."

And so on—just like a *Western Mail* leader.

The hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Newport, East did pretty well in cataloguing Welsh woes but I hope, for all our sakes, that no potential inward investor reads their speeches. The summit of a volcano would seem to be a safer place to invest than any of our valleys.

We might brush off these cataclysmic dirges as hackneyed and Labour out-of-office verbiage if it were not for the fact that they are taken up by the mentally impoverished media, which seem only to be able to sell a preconceived, gloom-and-doom view of Wales. Any success we may have has to fit in with their eschatological view that, if the end of the world is nigh, it is nearer in Wales than anywhere else.

To think, as so many of the Opposition seem to think, that the solution to unemployment is a quick injection of public funds is superficial and dubious in the extreme. The London Business School's "Economic Outlook" as reported last Monday in the *Financial Times* gave a fair assessment of that proposition. Referring to the authors of "Economic Outlook", the article stated:

"They conclude that, on balance, the Government should stick to its financial strategy for reducing its borrowing, money supply growth and inflation. But special measures, including particular investment projects or tax-cutting measures, could help provide jobs in the short-term."

"The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" in January show that we in Wales have had the capital resources this year, and will have more next year, for major investment programmes. The total capital expenditure within the sphere of responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will grow from £570 million in 1984-85 to £586 million in 1985-86. My right hon. Friend has indicated some of the areas where this additional money will be spent. The local authorities will also have more capital available to them.

Of course the Opposition want still more, as my hon. Friends the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki), for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) realise. The Labour party wants a massive flood of public expenditure which will burst through the banks of governmental constraints, leaving our policies as tattered as the Labour Government's policies were when the IMF came in to pick up the pieces in 1976. A fat lot of good that would do for the unemployed in Wales.

An area where there can be more capital investment next year is the Welsh water authority. As a result of the increased target rate of return on net revalued assets, the authority can increase its capital investment to £55 million, compared with a likely figure this year of £40 million. It has also been possible to increase the authority's external financing limit to £20 million despite the overall reduction in EFLs for the water industry in England and Wales. So there will be a substantial programme of infrastructure improvements in this important area of the environment, and I hope that those who have called for the improvements and more investment will welcome our decision.

While on the subject of water, which was raised during Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon, let me clarify the position on charges. The Welsh water authority has managed to keep its main charges increase to 8 per cent.—one of the lowest in England and Wales. Charges to industry, commerce and agriculture—the hon. for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) should listen to this—will be below the rate of inflation for the second year running, and that should give heart to those sectors of the economy. As to domestic charges, of the 12 per cent. increase, 5·25 per cent. is to cover the expected increase in costs, 4 per cent. is due to the authority's own scheme for making charges as between non-domestic and domestic consumers more equitable, and 2·75 per cent. only is attributable to the Government's new target regime.

We have heard a great deal about defective buildings and alleged deficiencies in the Health Service and not half enough about the advances made in treating patients. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside made no secret of his interest in the National Health Service's shortcomings in his letter to district health authority chairmen. He said:

"It would be helpful if you could list projects that may not go forward because of funding difficulties."

Is he not interested in the projects that will go ahead, and in the initiatives that have been, are being and will be taken by the Government?

The hon. Gentleman made no mention of the 40,000 more in-patient cases and the 250,000 more out-patient attendances dealt with in 1983 as compared with 1979. The House is familiar with our 10-year strategy to develop services for the mentally handicapped. It knows of the development of bone marrow transplantation, cardiac surgery and cardiology, the main renal unit at Morriston and subsidiary renal units at Carmarthen and Bangor. The House knows, too, of the continuing work of the perinatal mortality survey group and the Health Education Advisory Committee, and of the five-year heartbeat programme designed to reduce the 10,000 deaths a year in Wales from

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

heart disease and the 25,000 who suffer from angina and related conditions. On 8 March, we shall announce our further proposals to combat hard drug abuse in Wales. Several initiatives—less dramatic but no less important —are progressing, including the establishment of the new independent family practitioner committees, the appointment of new district general managers and computerisation.

The NHS in Wales is advancing on many and varied fronts and yet again, as my right hon. Friend announced earlier this week, there is to be an increase in funding next year. As the biggest employer in Wales and spending some £900 million a year of the taxpayers' money, it would be a miracle if the NHS was without its problems. None is more important than the problem of the individual patient whom the system appears to have failed. As some hon. Members will know, such individual patient problems are often taken up by Ministers and we give them our fullest, most detailed attention. The Prime Minister brings her own personal influence to bear on the thorough and intensive examination of such cases to ensure that the rights of patients and relatives are fully respected and safeguarded. Against this background, I am appalled by the squalid, paranoid attack launched against my right hon. Friend in connection with Ysbyty Gwynedd.

We all know that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) is the hatchet man of the parliamentary Labour party. A Labour hatchet man fighting for reselection throws his hatchet with the accuracy of an injured Indian brave.

My right hon. Friend has already made a clear statement to the House, spanning three or more Administrations, on the university hospital of Wales, Cardiff. He has made a full disclosure of the facts. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) appreciates that.

There are questions still to be asked. Let me pose a few questions. What happened during the period up to 1973 when the first piece of mosaic cladding fell, when the Welsh hospital board was responsible and when Lord Prys-Davies was chairman of the board? He was singularly reticent on that point when he questioned my noble Friend, Lord Caithness, on his statement about the hospital defects in the other place on 12 February. He did not even declare his interest.

What happened during the five years of the Labour Government from 1974 to 1979 when the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) was in charge with Lord Prys-Davies, as his special adviser and the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside as his Under-Secretary with responsibility for the NHS? Did Ministers approve the issue of the final certificate in 1975 when, according to Mr. West, the clerk of works, "hundreds of defects" were being reported? The issue of that certificate proved to be a serious obstacle to the pursuit of legal remedies. Why was it left to the incoming Conservative Government to pursue such claims as were open to us? The last Labour Government have a great deal to answer for.

With regard to Ysbyty Gwynedd, the contract for the residences was awarded to IDC in 1978 under the Labour Government. It was left to us to remedy the defects and to ensure that the taxpayer gets full value for his money.

The hon. Member for Torfaen, as a solicitor, should know well that it would be wholly inappropriate for me to give figures relating to current claims subject to negotiation and possible litigation. The House will be informed in due course.

With regard to the hospital itself, a writ has been served on the hospital design consortium. Proceedings are therefore under way and again it would be wholly inappropriate for me to give details. Again, the outcome will be reported in due course. We make periodic reports to the PAC.

Mr. Abse *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has had a fair time. I have a great deal to answer.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned housing. All arguments about housing come back in the end to the question of finance, and this afternoon the Opposition have again charged us with providing inadequate levels of housing finance, but that charge is again not supported by the facts. Public capital expenditure in Welsh housing during the first five years of this Administration exceeded £790 million. That is over £80 million more than in the last five years of Labour Government. In the past two financial years alone, capital expenditure on housing totalled about £460 million. Those are substantial figures and compare well with the Opposition's record. In real terms too, the comparison is good—expenditure in 1983-84, when we conducted a major attack on the problems of unfitness in the private stock, was the highest in real terms since 1976-77.

This time last year, I was forecasting housing capital expenditure for 1984-85 of about £200 million, based mainly on the gross provisions for local authorities and the Housing Corporation. We know now that expenditure by the year end will be higher than that, but I remind the House that we expect gross housing capital expenditure for 1985-86 to be very close to the 1984-85 provision of some £200 million. The Housing Corporation's net provision of £39 million has been maintained for next year, and gross provision for local authorities, at £146·5 million, is only £5 million, or 3·3 per cent. down on this year's provision. That reduction is entirely due to falling receipts. In fact, we have estimated that receipts income will be nearly £20 million less in 1985-86 than that forecast for 1984-85 and we have protected authorities' expenditure to a very large extent by increasing net provision by nearly £15 million.

Labour Members accuse us of making swingeing cuts in the education service and I am sorry that they have been joined by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North. We have not heard much on that line during the debate, perhaps because the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside remembered the time when he had ministerial responsibility for education in Wales. In 1975, he had to predict that there would be little scope for major new initiatives in the coming year or two. He had to admit that increased resources were not the only way to safeguard and improve the standard. It is worth my confirming what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, that current expenditure on education in Wales has remained virtually constant in real terms.

The fortunes of Wales are inextricably tied to those of the rest of the United Kingdom, and we should be glad that the prospects for the United Kingdom are as healthy as they are. They are so because of the Government's relentless pursuit of the strategy of reducing inflation by monetary restraint and stimulating output and jobs by

enabling our economy to adapt to new demands, as some of my hon. Friends have appreciated—my hon. Friends the Members for the Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) in particular. The strategy is working. We have lowered inflation, output has been growing over the past four years and employment is higher than in the first quarter of 1983. With inflation under control, those trends are expected to continue and we in Wales can expect to benefit along with the rest of the United Kingdom.

We are going through a long period of change in the structure of the Welsh economy. Nobody should doubt that there is still a major role for coal and steel in Wales, but we need a wider base on which to stand firm—hence the new industries that we are attracting. We have done extremely well. The Opposition have not paid due credit to my right hon. Friend for some of what he announced today. The people of Wales are highly adaptable and our work force is second to none, as the many foreign companies that have established themselves in Wales will testify. In addition to continuing our effective coal and steel——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, the Companies Bill *[Lords]*, the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Bill *[Lords]* and the Business Names Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Orders of the Day

Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

10.1 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It will be for the convenience of the House if I deal also with the Companies Bill, the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Bill and the Business Names Bill.

The labours that have produced this consolidation have been Herculean, as it is the first consolidation of the company law of Great Britain since 1948. They demand an expression of our admiration and gratitude to all concerned. I should like to name the distinguished retired Parliamentary Counsel Mr. Godfrey Carter, who was responsible for the drafting. I should like also to mention the members of the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c; Bills under the Chairmanship of Lord Brightman. The perceptiveness, accuracy and celerity of their work have been of the greatest value.

In deference to all that has been done, it is only fitting that we should note the daunting scale of the task. The Companies Act 1948 is still the principal Act, but since 1948 there have been five major company law statutes and other primary legislation which have affected company law. There has also been a great deal of subordinate legislation regulating matters concerned in the main Act. It is not surprising that it has taken four years to consolidate all of this.

There has been some discussion about the structure of the consolidation. The Business Names Bill and the Companies Securities (Insider Dealing) Bill deal with matters that are freestanding and essentially outside the mainstream of company law. The Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill deals with transitional and technical matters which are essentially of secondary importance and are more conveniently wrapped up in a separate Bill. On the recommendation of the Law Commission, it repeals a few obsolete provisions, otherwise everything is contained in the main Companies Bill.

Views were invited on a radically different structure by which the consolidation would have been split into some 10 separate Bills, each dealing with a discrete topic. The scope of the main Bill would have been limited to matters affecting the formation, capital, administration and investigation of companies. Consultations showed opinion to be clearly in favour of a single main Bill on the classical model of the 1948 Bill. The structure of the consolidation accordingly reflects directly the wishes of those who will have to use it.

As to publication and implementation, the need for a further consolidation has long been recognised, and the general view of the business community and of the legal and accountancy professions is that the Bills should be implemented as soon as possible. That is also our view. We cannot complete consideration of the consequential provisions Bill tonight because some small amendments are required to correct technical deficiencies in schedule

[The Solicitor-General]

1. I nevertheless hope that we shall be able to deal with all stages of the other three Bills tonight. Once they receive Royal Assent, the Acts will be published before the end of April to give users as much time as possible to familiarise themselves with the form of the new legislation before it comes into effect on 1 July.

Since the Bills were first introduced in another place, the only criticism of the consolidation has been that further legislation will start to undo its good effects almost as soon as it reaches the statute book. That is regrettably true, but I fear that it is an outcome that cannot be avoided, because the pace of change in company law is such that if this consolidation had waited on other measures now before Parliament or in preparation, it would have been delayed indefinitely. As it is, the consolidation brings fresh order to the present tortuous state of the law in this area and provides a firm base for future reform. That is its object. Each of these Bills has been approved by the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the House will approve of the Solicitor-General's suggestion that we should deal with the Bills together on Second Reading, and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) may like to do likewise. After that, in the interests of good order, I shall have to put the Questions on them separately.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I endorse what the Solicitor-General said, particularly his remarks on the work of the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills. The Committee performs a useful duty and saves the House and another place a considerable amount of work that we would otherwise have to find another way of dealing with. The Opposition, having been party to the Bills as they went through the consolidation process, support the product of those deliberations and express their thanks to the people who put hard and painstaking work into achieving them.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Neubert.]*

Committee tomorrow.

COMPANIES BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Neubert.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

COMPANIES SECURITIES (INSIDE DEALING) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Neubert.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

BUSINESS NAMES BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Neubert.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge (Liver Transplants)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.11 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this important issue in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), in whose constituency Addenbrooke's hospital used to be, is equally concerned about the matter, and has taken an equally keen interest as I have myself. As I shall be critical of Government handling of Addenbrooke's hospital, let me say straight away that I greatly admire both the Minister for Health and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary who is to reply. In my view, they are among the most successful Ministers of this Administration.

I broadly support — and indeed enthusiastically support—the Government's policy towards the National Health Service. In particular, the policy of privatising the ancillary services and curbing excessive expenditure on drugs in order to release more funds for essential medical services meets with my complete approval. I am delighted that, since 1979, the Government have doubled the overall amount allocated to the NHS.

I am very proud that Addenbrooke's hospital is in my constituency. It is one of the best hospitals in the country and probably, indeed, in the world. Outstanding medical work is done there, especially in liver transplants, under Professor Calne. As the Minister has said publicly,

"liver transplantation is a life-saving procedure."

Following the case of little Ben Hardwick, which was widely publicised on television, the public responded with their traditional great generosity by contributing £150,000 for a special unit for liver transplants at Addenbrooke's. Not unnaturally, however, the health authority's delight was tempered with anxiety because the actual cost exceeded that sum, and there would be continuing costs each year. But then a good fairy arrived in the shape of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. On 30 April 1984 he told the health authority that he certainly did not envisage that the authority would be expected to divert money from its own patient care to what was a national service. He said:

"It is certainly not my intention that other services at Cambridge should suffer."

On the strength of this, the authority went ahead and submitted its estimated cost of about £1·3 million to £1·4 million to a departmental expert committee. That committee, without any explanation, announced that it would provide the sum of £859,000. Although this was less than was asked for and needed, it was hailed with pleasure in my constituency by professionals, patients and public alike.

Then the bombshell landed because, of that sum, it transpired from the Minister's subsequent statement that no less than £567,000 of existing spending by the authority was to be deducted, leaving only £290,000 new money for a new and vital life-saving service. This, according to Professor Calne, the distinguished surgeon, is barely enough to carry out the 40 operations per annum, let alone the 50 envisaged. Therefore, 10 patients per annum will be at risk unless the local regional budget is raided.

The result of all this—it is a disease well known in Whitehall that I call accountant-itis—is that Cambridge will have to cut other services if it is to sustain the number of liver transplant operations envisaged. If liver sufferers are to be saved, services such as development of the intensive care unit, the work on bone marrow transplants and, indeed, other local medical services will be hit in order to pay for what is acknowledged by the Minister to be a supra-regional or national service. In this context, therefore, let me stress that less than 5 per cent. of liver transplant cases at Addenbrooke's hospital come from the local area; these cases come from the whole country and, indeed, some come from abroad.

All this—and I must say this in forceful terms—is in direct contrast with what the Minister for Health said in April 1984 on which the authority based its future plans. This accountant-itis has caused dismay in the area and deep anxiety for those unfortunates whose lives may depend upon this unique service. Frankly, this is not good enough.

The amount involved is small in the context of the National Health Service budget as a whole. I have worked out that it is ·004 per cent. of the amount spent each year by the Government on the National Health Service. It is dwarfed by some of the appalling waste to which I could refer if I had the time. Nor, indeed, is it the sort of expenditure that will be repeated all over the country. These operations require a high degree of skill which can be exploited only at Addenbrooke's and King's. It would be tragic if, through bureaucratic obscurity and/or Treasury parsimony, this skill was lost, and lives were lost in the process.

I know that the Minister believes, as I do, in the importance of giving priority to patient care. There are few patients who are in need of such care as are the sufferers of liver disease, many of them little children like the famous Ben Hardwick. Therefore, I beg the Minister with all the force at my command to think again, and to give the life-saving service that is carried out at Addenbrooke's the resources that it needs.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South West, (Sir A. Grant) for raising this subject on the Adjournment, as it gives me the opportunity to clear up some misunderstandings that seem to have arisen. My hon. Friend has been pursuing this issue vigorously with both myself and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. Indeed, he has already addressed us both on the issue personally, has written to us and has been successful now in raising the subject on the Adjournment of the House. He has pursued the whole issue with his customary vigour in the interests of his constituents, and I know that his concern is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), in whose constituency Addenbrooke's hospital used to lie.

I think that there have been some misunderstandings, and I welcome this opportunity to try to set the record straight. But to do so I shall have to go into some detail about the mechanisms of funding what are now known as supra regional specialties. So I hope that my hon. Friend and the House will bear with me for a moment. However, let me first make clear at the outset that the Government

[Mr. John Patten]

support the development of liver transplantation as a life-saving procedure. We value the work of the talented and skilled transplant surgeons who undertake such work, supported as they are by devoted nursing staff and ancillary workers. Among those distinguished people, we value the work done by Professor Calne and by all those who work in his unit.

We have just announced that liver transplantation is to be designated as a supra regional service with effect from 1 April 1985, and it may be helpful if I begin by outlining the general arrangements for the designation and funding of supra regional services before moving on to the specific point about the funding of the Addenbrooke's unit that my hon. Friend has raised so forcefully and eloquently. We need to set the case, the problem and the misunderstandings that surround the Addenbrooke's issue within the overall context of how we fund such services nationally. It is impossible to understand one without the other.

Early in 1983 my Department agreed with regional health authorities and with the Joint Consultants Committee, which represents hospital consultants, on the introduction of new arrangements for the funding of a small number of highly specialised and very advanced health services which, in order to be economically viable and/or clinically effective, need to be provided for a population that is significantly larger than that of any one single health region. These are services that are provided by very few regional health authorities to meet a substantial part of a national caseload. It would clearly be unreasonable to expect any one region at present to provide funds out of its own resources for these very advanced forms of medical treatment. However, typically in the National Health Service, that is how things begin — with a few centres of excellence. Thus these techniques will undoubtedly be disseminated from centres of excellence such as Addenbrooke's to other hospitals until we no longer need to designate services as supra regional services, because they can be taken up within the generality of the NHS. That has been the story of many medical advances, particularly since the second world war. Under these arrangements, a supra regional services advisory group has been established with certain terms of reference. It is important to put them on the record. They are:

"To advise the Secretary of State, through the Chairmen of Regional Health Authorities, on the identification of services to be funded supra regionally, on the centres where these services should be provided, and on the appropriate level of provision."

The advisory group is chaired by an experienced regional chairman, Mr. Tony Driver of South-West Thames, and we are grateful to him and to the group's membership. The group is made up of representatives of health authorities and of the medical profession. Thus it is very much a case of the Health Service itself making decisions about how these funds should be allocated and to whom they should be allocated, on the grounds not just of economy or of economic viability but of the clinical service and the excellence of the units themselves.

Each autumn the advisory group finalises its recommendations on funding for the next year. These are then put to a meeting of regional chairmen — the 14 regional chairmen who serve the Health Service so well, like Sir Arthur South, the chairman of the East Anglian regional health authority — so that they have an opportunity to comment. The recommendations are the forwarded to the Secretary of State, who announces hi decisions just before Christmas or, as was the case thi year, just after Christmas.

Four services were designated as supra regional at th outset—spinal services, services for children who suffe end stage renal failure, services for the management c chorion carcinoma, and the national poisons informatio service. Since then the four services have had added t them neonatal and infant cardiac surgery — which ar right at the boundaries of surgery — and now live transplantation. I should make it clear that thes arrangements do not apply to services that are still at th research or development stage. They apply only—quit properly to our mind — to services that are clinicall established and which are already being provided an funded by one or other of a small number of regions t meet what, it appears, will be established clinical needs

This means—these are important matters in trying t fill in the background to the Addenbrooke issue—tha when a service is designated as supra regional for the firs time, the regions concerned will already be spending pa of their allocations on its provision. It would not b reasonable for this existing expenditure to be disregarde when the regional allocations are made. This money i "protected". In other words, it is reserved specifically fo the unit providing the service.

This "protected" sum is not an additional allocatio from central funds. On the other hand, the region receive some benefit in that the amount is excluded from th calculations when decisions are made about futur allocation levels for the region's general services or, to us technical language, which is perhaps not the best thing t do at this time of night, when it is disregarded, to use th deathless prose of NHS administrators through the ages when calculating the region's distance from its regiona allocation working party target, which is used i redistributing health services within the country so tha areas which historically have been under-funded an under-provided, such as East Anglia, now experienc substantial rates of growth that are far more substantia than other parts of the country.

East Anglia has been, and will remain, one of th fastest growing regions in the development of medica services. The picture is rosier for East Anglia, despite th problems that it faces, such as the Addenbrooke problem than it has ever been. I am sorry that no Labour Member are in the Chamber to hear me say that East Angli suffered terribly between 1976 and 1978-79 from cuts i NHS funding, which affected adversely capital exper diture on new hospitals and hospital building and revenu allocations to East Anglia. The Government have worke hard since 1979 to ensure that East Anglia catches up. is worth while getting that clear.

The region benefits also in the method of calculatio that I have described, in that it is relieved of th responsibility of finding any additional money to financ any expansion of the service that may be required. It i open to the supra regional services advisory group t recommend that additional money be allocated fro central funds if it decides that the service should b expanded.

I will summarise that aspect because it is crucial to th debate. Money already being spent on the provision of service is protected within the region's general allocatio and is disregarded in calculating the region's futur

general allocations, whereas money for the expansion of the service beyond its existing level is found from central funds.

After that general and, I hope, clear exposition of the present situation of funding, I come to the specific case of liver transplantation, from which I can proceed to the Addenbrooke's issue, which is uppermost in my hon. Friend's mind.

In the case of liver transplantation, applications for the service to be designated as supra regional were received early in 1984. The supra regional services advisory group then asked the Royal College of Physicians for its views, and the Royal College set up a working party which reported in the autumn of 1984.

The report advised that liver transplantation met the criteria for supra regional designation and that four units — Birmingham, the Royal Free and King's College hospital and Cambridge—should be designated as supra regional centres for its provision.

The advisory group endorsed that advice and made recommendations as to the amounts of money that should be allocated to each of those centres. Those recommendations were made on the basis of financial and workload information obtained from the four regional health authorities responsible for the four centres. We accepted the advisory group's recommendations.

For the liver transplant unit at Addenbrooke's, it was estimated that the amount of money being spent on the service during 1984-85 was £567,000, and this was the sum that was protected and earmarked within the region's allocation specifically for the unit.

Although that estimate had to be based on data received in the middle of the financial year—not always the best time to obtain accurate data—we have no reason to believe that it is substantially wide of the mark. In addition, the advisory group recommended that the work of the unit be expanded, and a further allocation of £292,000 was made from central funds, making a total according to our calculations—calculated in the way in which I explained—of £859,000 available to the unit for the coming financial year, 1985-86.

We greatly regret that there have been misunderstanding about the nature of the funding arrangements for the Addenbrooke's unit, and to be frank, the Minister of State and I were rather surprised, too. The arrangements that I described at some length—anxious, as I was, to explain the position to my hon. Friend and his constituents—were set out in a health notice which was issued in 1983.

That type of notice is well understood. It set out the procedures that I had understood were well established and well known in the National Health Service. They have been applied to all the other designated supra regional services without giving rise to any difficulties; no other unit in the country has complained about the situation in the way in which Addenbrooke's has complained.

In other words, all other hospitals and units seem to have understood the method of funding set out in the health notice and the way in which the recommendations of the group were being applied.

My hon. Friend referred to the text of a letter written by the Minister of State about the Ben Hardwick bed. I must make it clear that that letter was primarily concerned with the financing of the Ben Hardwick bed, and that was not an appropriate context for spelling out in full the way in which the central funding of supra regional services works. That letter was concerned with the Ben Hardwick bed—nothing more and nothing less.

On the key issue which so radically concerns my hon. Friend it is perhaps worth noting that an officer of the East Anglian regional health authority is a member of the supra regional service advisory group and was party to its recommendations. The East Anglian region was represented at the regional chairmen's meeting in November last year, and thus there was a clear opportunity for the region to comment on the recommendations before they even got to my right hon. and learned Friend and to me. I understand that no comments were made.

However this unfortunate set of misunderstandings has come about, it is particularly to be regretted that a substantial increase in the funds allocated to the unit, amounting to almost £300,000, should have been reported locally as a savage cut. That seems to us to be an unusual interpretation.

That having been said—and I am sure that my hon. Friend appreciates that I must set out as clearly as I can the facts as I and my right hon. and learned Friend see them—of course we have the welfare of this unit at heart. The die is cast for 1985-86, but we shall continue during the course of the year to keep the work and the needs of the unit under review.

Sir Anthony Grant: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said, and I have been listening to him very carefully. I am anxious that he should not close the door on this. I want him to be absolutely clear that he will follow the course of this vital unit and that a chink of hope can be given to it for the future if this is a success.

Mr. Patten: We will certainly keep the work of the unit under close scrutiny. Together with the advisory group, we shall keep the situation continuously under review during 1985-86.

I should like to end as I began by paying a tribute to the unit for the work it is doing at Addenbrooke's. This is something which unites my hon. Friend and myself tonight. The unit carried out a substantial number of liver transplants in 1984 and is the only unit to have developed expertise in liver transplants in children.

The additional money that we have allocated for 1985-86 is clear evidence of our commitment to the unit, whose future we shall keep under review. I hope that our support will enable its work to go forward on a firm footing.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 1 March 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Taxation and Benefits

9.35 am

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that the Government has maintained all the major social security benefits at levels above the rate of inflation; notes that the social security system absorbs some 30 per cent. of public spending, a proportion which is likely to increase with serious consequences for the ability of governments to reduce taxation; is concerned that because of the complexity of the benefit and tax systems care is inadequately targeted to those most in need, that benefits are difficult to understand and often to claim as well as being unnecessarily expensive to administer and that the system acts as a disincentive to work and job creation; and therefore calls upon the Government to initiate a fundamental and radical reform of the benefit and tax systems leading to their harmonisation and ultimately to their full integration, and thereby to ensure basic care for all our citizens and the abolition of the poverty and unemployment traps.

I understand that the chance of drawing first place twice running in the ballot for private Members' motions is about 120,000 to one, so I feel that I am very fortunate. However, I fear that my chances of drawing first place again in the next 30 years or so, if my constituents return me to this House, are slim indeed.

Two weeks ago I asked the House to debate an issue of high moral and ethical concern. This morning I have decided to ask the House to debate what is indisputably the most expensive item of Government expenditure and, in the view of many, the most vital aspect of Government activity. I refer to the activities and the cost of the welfare state and the social security system.

In my view, society is judged not just by the opportunities that it provides for those who are most able in society but by the care it gives to those who are least able. The Government are judged not just by the amount of public money that they are prepared to spend on these activities but by the efficiency with which they disburse those public moneys. This House of Commons is judged by the ability and concern with which it is prepared to give constructive advice to the Government before the Government make up their mind on these very important issues.

Criticism of the present welfare system has come from all sides. I need only quote a few. The Institute of Fiscal Studies recently said:

"There are few people in Britain today with much affection for our benefit system. It has become a nightmare to administer. Its complexities and anomalies have become a byword and many people fail to get the benefits they need."

The noble Lord, Lord Harris of High Cross, speaking in the other place, said of the defenders of the status quo in the welfare state:

"they so prostrate themselves before the sacred, if somewhat tarnished, structure that they cannot see the central reality that indiscriminate state charity has created an unsustainable burden." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 November 1982; Vol. 436, c. 920.]

The National Consumer Council said of the benefits system that it is

"cracking under burdens not foreseen by its founder 42 years ago."

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations said:

"The social security and taxation system discriminates strongly against those who have never been able to work, against the long-term unemployed, against unemployed people seeking part-time work and married women. These problems will not be resolved by a series of hasty and piecemeal reviews."

In a Social Affairs Unit pamphlet the author applied these adjectives to the welfare state: incomprehensible, uncoordinated, deteriorating, discriminatory and destabilising. That is why I believe it is necessary to have this debate.

What is wrong with the present system? First, it creates the poverty trap. If a person works harder and is at the bottom end of the wages scale, he is worse off. If a married man with a wife and more than one child earns between £50 and £120 a week, he loses £1·09 for every extra pound that he earns.

That is equivalent to a marginal tax rate of 109 per cent. Paul Getty with all his millions was never asked to pay tax at such a high rate. For every extra pound that he earns, family income supplement is reduced by 50p and housing benefit by 33p, while tax goes up by 30p and national insurance by 9p. That is the poverty trap.

The system also creates the unemployment trap. If a previously unemployed person earns more than £4, he loses benefit for every pound that he earns, pound for pound.

Some people say that about 160,000 families in the United Kingdom are affected by the two traps. As a result it is impossible, or at least difficult, to persuade people to work for low wages. The effect on unemployment is unknown, but some authorities suggest that the two traps may account for one third of all unemployment.

We are creating not a society of opportunity but a society of despair. The system creates a benefit ratchet. Governments can easily introduce new benefits. Indeed, they are under constant pressure to do so. A delegate speaking at a Social Democratic party conference recently apparently looked forward to the state looking after "as yet undiscovered minorities."

It is difficult to reduce benefits, because benefits are supposed to help the poor and any reduction is seen as an attack on the poor. The voter is left with an unenviable choice. Should he press for the tax cuts that he knows in his heart he would prefer so that he can spend his money as he wishes, or should he join a pressure group to enrich himself and his station at the expense of others? That is the middle-class backlash described in the letters which have filled our postbags recently.

The safety net is full of holes. One can claim for many benefits only if one has an address, but if one has no money one cannot acquire an address from which to claim. That is why, in 1985, nearly 80 years after Lloyd George introduced his pioneering Budget, people have to sleep in newspapers under Hungerford bridge, 10 minutes away from this gilded palace. That is not acceptable.

Because of the complexity of the system, many people who are entitled to benefits do not claim them. How many old people live in loneliness, poverty and despair because they are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled? The system leads to family breakdown. It

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

actively penalises marriage and encourages people to place the elderly members of their families in old people's homes rather than to look after them at home.

The system leads to welfare imprisonment. If a person is thrifty and saves £2,000, all benefits stop. How many budding Thatcherites are enmeshed in the net, unable even to get on to the ladder? The system leads to waste. Benefits are paid to those who do not need them. Executives in the top income bracket receive benefits in spite of the various tax reliefs which they also receive.

The present system is Byzantine in its complexity, it creates disincentives and it is expensive to administer. A person seeking benefit often has to trail around a local DHSS office which may be acting on behalf of a local Department of Employment office. How many impoverished people are forced to tread that unending maze around the welfare state?

The system is characterised by the Government's ignorance of the personal, financial state of us all. Incredibly, the state does not know whether an individual is a net beneficiary or a net contributor to the state, even in the narrow sense of net benefits and cash taxes. The state is supposed to care for the poor, but it does not know whether any individual is losing or gaining from the state's activities. All this leads to some over-payment because some benefits such as family income supplement and housing benefit are assessed over a short period but are paid over a much longer period and people can continue receiving benefit when they are no longer entitled to it.

The system creates benefit static. People who are clever enough can combine all the benefits to which they are entitled and all the tax reliefs and make large sums out of the state—legally. It creates a youth trap. Employers simply cannot afford to employ young people and to pay them the relatively high wages required to ensure that their wages are above benefit level.

In the United Kingdom, the youth wage is 70 per cent. of the adult wage. In West Germany it is only 30 per cent. of the adult wage. Youth unemployment is endemic in the United Kingdom. In Germany it is almost unknown. The state and the House of Commons are pricing young people out of jobs. We create the vacuum and then, at great cost, we have to devise schemes such as the youth training scheme to fill that vacuum.

The system leads to rising expectations and dwindling resources. As the benefit ratchet clicks on, so the money available from the taxpayer slowly runs out. It is estimated that by 1995 revenues from North sea oil will have declined by £10 billion and private revenues will have declined by £5 billion. That decline of £15 billion is equivalent to the sum spent on the Health Service today.

In every year under this Government, and under previous Governments, the state spends more on welfare in real terms. That spending goes up by 2 or 3 per cent. each year. Under the present system it is impossible for any Government to have the political will or opportunity substantially to reduce the budget. Benefits are widespread. About two thirds of council tenants receive some benefit. Housing benefit is paid to one household in three. No longer do we give benefits to the poorest alone. No longer are we fulfilling the dreams of those who created the welfare state. We are creating the habit of dependence, not the habit of incentive.

We are also creating a guilt complex. Nobody receiving something for nowt. We are creating depr and feelings of inadequacy. For every social security or no-good layabout there are dozens of people who c resent their dependence and who want the chance to out of the system.

We face a considerable problem because o increasing age of the population. Half the £40 billion on welfare goes to old-age pensioners. That prop will continue to increase as the population becomes and the birth rate declines. A smaller and s economically active part of the population will be p for an ever larger share of the benefits paid to the ina That leads to resentment and ultimately perhaps to provision for the elderly. None of us wants that.

What is the cost of all this? The cost is escalati is going at an ever-increasing pace down an steepening hill. Command 9428, containing Government's expenditure plans, says that in 1985- shall spend £38,378 million on the welfare stat 1987-88 we shall be spending £42,372 million. compares with £572 million spent in 1945, £813 m in 1955 and £1,362 million in 1965.

Social security now accounts for 30 per cent. public expenditure. Incredibly, 85,000 state empl are needed to administer it. Ten thousand employees the national insurance contribution records, at a c £100 million a year. It costs 5p for every distributed, compared with 2p for every pound col by the Inland Revenue. The costs of this infernal ma are increased by duplication. Claimants are often en to more than one benefit. In 1983-84, 15 per cen pensioners were entitled to supplementary benefit. had to undergo more than one assessment, which inc further administrative costs. That leads to mistakes

Over the years, we have heard a great deal about security fraud. I do not intend to deal with that t because I can point out that 9·5 per cent. o supplementary benefit payments are subsequently fou be incorrect because of administrative mistakes. arcane system leads to a lack of innovation. We do n the innovation in the state sector as we do in the p sector for pension provision. The system ac discourages private provision for pensions and we All but the best employees and most wealthy indivi pay twice into the system, once through taxes and through private provision.

Those are the arguments that have been levelled a the welfare system by all sides, all political partie every pressure group involved in this area. How ca improve the system, bearing in mind that the present of expenditure is unlikely to be sustained for any l of time by any Government? I am sorry that Opposition Members are not interested in the w state. It would be nice if some Opposition Members present. I am glad that a considerable numbe Conservative Members, and even a representative fro Liberal party, are present to discuss this important i Whatever the Labour party says, it will not be ab sustain levels of expenditure, as the experience of F shows.

We cannot deal with the problem simply by tink with it. At present, care is free at the point of consump The benefit review presents an opportunity. My me today is that the Government should be prepared to radical steps to devise a strategic plan for the integ

of taxes and benefits. That is the only solution. There is no point in half-hearted steps or tinkering with the system, because that will achieve nothing. There is no shortage of suggestions.

Mr. A. B. Atkinson, writing in *New Society* recently, quoted Sidney Smith's writings in the *Edinburgh Review* 150 years ago. Sidney Smith wrote:

"A pamphlet on the Poor Laws generally contains some little piece of favourite nonsense by which we are told this enormous evil may be perfectly cured."

Today, Mr. Atkinson notes that the

"flow of proposals, more cautiously advertised, has not abated."

He then lists eight serious proposals for reforming the welfare state.

I intend to deal not with the new Beveridge proposals, but with the reforms that are designed to integrate the tax and benefits systems. Some of them give a basic income guarantee. The nearest we came to the negative income tax scheme was in the 1972 Green Paper presented by the then Conservative Government, which proposed a weekly tax credit to replace the existing system of personal tax allowance, family allowance and family income supplement. It was described by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Anthony Barber, as

"representing the most radical reform of PAYE and the social security system for a quarter of a century."

It is regrettable that the scheme was aborted by the 1974 general election.

More recent proposals have combined the tax credit idea with concentrating resources on those most in need. I am most attracted to a recent report produced by the Institute of Fiscal Studies which devises a benefit credit scheme. The basic thrust of the report is that the national insurance concept is more honoured in the breach now than in the performance, and that the concept of national insurance should be swept away. It states that the present tax and social security systems should be replaced by a group of tax credits, with corresponding rates on income and benefit credits and corresponding withdrawal rates on income. The underlying principle of the report is that the system should operate much more selectively.

It is interesting to note that the sweeping changes brought about by integrating the two systems, by being more selective and by preventing the rich from acquiring the benefits which Beveridge never intended them to receive immensely widen the options available to the Government. The Government could cut the number of poor households from 3 million to 400,000 with no tax increase. Alternatively, they could take 5p from the standard rate of income tax and still reduce the number of families in poverty by one third. Radical reform and integration is the only way forward.

There is one radical scheme which I shall deal with now in detail because it has not been debated by the House before — that is, the benefit-plus scheme or the minimum income guarantee scheme. For many years, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has taken a great interest in that, and I am pleased to see him present this morning. There are various permutations of the minimum income guarantee scheme, but basically every citizen would be given a basic benefit depending on his age and responsibility, not his income. The important part is that that benefit would never be taxed. It would be received as of right and in total as a complete replacement for all present tax allowances and reliefs. The citizen would pay tax at a single flat rate—I find that attractive—for every pound he earned on top of that. The tax and benefits systems would thereby be rendered radically more simple.

The level of benefit—this is where we may get into problems and from where the criticisms of the scheme come—would have to be big enough to be a subsistence benefit. It could be put at £28 for a single person, with a supplement of £10 for pensioners, a benefit of £13 for children, a benefit of £28 for householders, and additional benefits for one-parent families, expectant mothers and the disabled. The supplementary benefit, family income supplement, unemployment benefit and housing benefit would thus be replaced with a single universal benefit, and the 1,000 or so paragraphs of social security regulations would be condensed into about 50 paragraphs. Under the scheme, the basic unit is the individual.

The scheme can be geared in a limitless number of ways. To introduce that scheme, the schemes proposed by the Liberal and Social Democratic parties, or the scheme suggested by the Institute of Fiscal Studies, we must accept the basic premise of the integration of the tax and benefits systems. On the benefit-plus scheme, a computer model can devise a level of benefit to ensure that most people are left with much the same money as they enjoy now, except that the poorest may be slightly better off and those with well above average incomes may be slightly worse off. There would, however, be no poverty and unemployment traps. Huge savings would be made in administration costs, and there would be considerably more incentives for people to go out and get all types of jobs.

The time has come for the Government to move in such a direction and to be prepared to take a radical view. The Government have increased social security benefits way above the rate of inflation, but under the present system no Government can give adequate care and support to those most in need. No Government will have the political will under the present system to end benefits to those who are substantially better off. The contributive principle has already been abandoned, and the state will now support a person whether or not he has paid contributions. We are simply maintaining a vast bureaucracy to maintain what is now fiction. We know that 53 million personal accounts are required in Newcastle to calculate benefits under the present system. Of course, we have two nations, and tax cuts will not help those at the bottom of the heap.

Until now, Governments have said that there is no alternative, but there are alternatives and the dignity of man requires nothing less. The Government have nothing to fear but reform itself. There is no point in the Government engaging in political damage limitation on this issue or, indeed, in the politics of talk rough and act soft. We can act radically and give the nation a new start. The Government can reveal their commitment to care and compassion and, above all, to initiative, enterprise and reform. The modernisation of the welfare state is the most important task of Government, and in the latter half of this Parliament the Government must not be found wanting. This is not the time for neutral Budgets in order to appease flaccid supporters on the Back Benches. Nor is it the time for a neutral benefits review in order to appease grasping pressure groups. This is the time for radical reform.

If we are not prepared to take that step, we shall not be able to meet the test created by Goldsmith in "The Deserted Village":

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

> "Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
> The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
> 'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
> Between a splendid and a happy land."

10.3 am

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on the excellent way in which he introduced this all-important matter. It was a most apt time to bring this matter to the attention of the House. I hope that we can exert pressure on the Government not to listen to those who say, "Steady as she goes," and, "Let us not do anything to upset anyone." My hon. Friend is right to call for radical reform. I have tried to persuade various Governments to do that for the past 10 or 12 years, and I believe that we are getting close to the time when radical changes will be made. Indeed, radical change must come whether the Government like it or not. We cannot continue to fund an open-ended system that is completely out of control.

In a recent excellent press article Sir John Hoskyns, the director of the Institute of Directors, said that there are between 20 and 30 million recipients of welfare. Even with extensive research, it is difficult to gauge the size of the area of welfare payments because it is so complex. That proves how thoroughly uncontrolled it has become. I believe that about 22 million people receive some sort of benefit and that about 16 million wage earners receive nothing. As time goes on, the latter are decreasing, so the load on non-recipients is becoming greater. Sooner or later, the last straw will break the camel's back.

It is a great mistake to believe that those out of work are the poorest people in the country. In many cases, the poorest people are those who have work but who are taxed into poverty. Then the state comes along and gives them dribs and drabs of benefit to try to take them out of poverty. I have consistently drawn the attention of the House to a friend of mine, Mr. Peter Hamilton-Lowe, who was unemployed for two and a half years before I met him. He got a job with Norwich health authority, but he discovered that he was £10 a week worse off in work, because of his circumstances—he has a mortgage and two children. I have watched his progress. He is still working there, and he has never been less than £3 a week worse off, and sometimes as much as £12 a week worse off, because he has been working. It is a terrible indictment on the state that we cannot make the system work better than that.

The Government are fighting against themselves with index-linked supplementary and other benefits. We consider 7·5 per cent. salary increases as rather high, but we must remember that the low paid are competing with those who are protected from inflation by indexed benefits. If we increase tax-free benefits by 4·7 per cent. or even 5 per cent., we should recognise that for the low paid to keep up with their base line they must receive pay increases of more than 7·5 per cent. At some stage we must recognise that we cannot continue to increase benefits as we have done during the past five years.

I would ask for even more radical reform than that for which my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle called. He asked for a complete integration of tax and welfare benefits, but I believe that the only way to solve the problem is completely to reform welfare and employment systems. We went wro we failed to implement the Beveridge report Beveridge knew exactly what would happen if h was not implemented completely. He said that, time, people would learn to rely on benefits. He after three or six months—whichever period is —unemployment benefit should cease and work be offered. This is where we have made a major The failure to offer work is one that needs urgent a Beveridge said that young people should not leav and immediately join a dole queue; he contended should receive training. I take that to mean some compulsory training. I hope that the Governm move in that direction very soon.

If we had a system in which the jobcentre bec workcentre, we would have a base that would enab able-bodied adult to be offered a job at £1·75 ar a maximum of £70 a week. That would enable us away numerous complex and complicated benefi would form a baseline that would eliminate the trap and the unemployment trap and provide an i for everyone to work. Indeed, everyone would opportunity to work.

It is unfortunate that there are not many repres of the official Opposition in the Chamber this Now that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. Mc has left her place on the Opposition Front Bench, none. However, there are those, when they are who seem to think that there is some merit i everybody. Indeed, there are some in the Cons party who take that view. They think that we sh worry about raising income tax thresholds and tha taxation leads to people being more involved. A a wife and two children—an average family— £110 a week pays about £25 a week in tax and insurance and receives about £25 a week in child housing benefit and free school meals. What an a There can be no sense in that. It is only the bu who gain from such a system.

There are others who argue that tax rates problem and not thresholds. I believe that we sho tax thresholds dramatically to more than £110 a w reduce tax rates. This would mean a massiv revenue of about £10 billion to £12 billion. Th money that we are taking from those who earn two thirds of the national average wage. We n ways of doing without £10 billion to £12 billion. simple to find a way of achieving that economy we are overmanned in the public sector to an e degree. In local government there are 1 milli employees than in 1960. They are costing over £ year each in wages and associated costs. I believ 1960 we had a better education service and better generally from local government than we are now. There is plenty of room to achieve a savin billion to £12 billion but it would be necessary to i radical change across the board to do so.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Me Gainsborough and Horncastle that we should p minimum income guarantee. Instead, I believe t should be an incentive to work, that work sh offered to anyone who wishes to work and that th do not want to work should receive nothing.

Our welfare system provides many strange be the system has become so complicated that ma

results are nonsensical. We have been led into a terrible trap. For example, why does everyone with a family need child benefit? Of course, there is a case for providing child benefit for the low paid and for those who are out of work, but it makes no sense to have universal child benefit. Why should the richest in the land receive child benefit? Why is there a difference in what is received for child support between those who are in work and those who are out of work? The answer lies in completely reforming child support. Child benefit should be given only to those who are in greatest need.

We have recently reformed the housing benefit system. The idea was to save manpower and reduce bureaucracy. If we tinker with the system again we shall only make it worse. The most recent reform did not save any manpower. Indeed, I believe that we are now employing an additional 3,000 to 4,000 to implement it. Why should we be giving any form of housing support to those earning over £12,000 a year? In some circumstances, it is possible to receive housing support on an income as high as £17,000 a year. What a ludicrous state of affairs.

I congratulate the Government on setting up four separate reviews of social benefits. The reviews have been a step forward and the Government have done something which no other Administration has done. However, there is no way in which those four reviews can arrive at a satisfactory answer. It is rather like fashioning four separate gear wheels in separate factories and then trying to mesh them together. I am sure that it is impossible to do that. Instead, we need a major overall reform that will produce one unified benefit—a taxation and employment system. There should be a positive gap between the level of earnings at which someone can receive benefit —an incentive gap—and the level at which tax becomes payable. We must institute a "workfare" system and a national youth training and work system so that we have one overall, comprehensive and radical reform to get Britain working once more.

10.18 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I listened with great interest to the contributions of the hon. Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). I congratulate the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle on choosing this important subject. There is some advantage to be gained from discussing such a subject on a Friday morning because it enables us to have a much more serious and sensible debate, although fewer hon. Members are present. Obviously, hon. Members have constituency interests which prevent them being in the Chamber. The debate is all the better for the presence of those hon. Members who have a genuine interest in the subject. I congratulate the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle on having had the good luck to draw first place twice in a row in the ballot for private Members' motions.

I have studied the motion with great interest. It states: "the Government has maintained all the major social security benefits at levels above the rate of inflation".

That cannot be controverted as a statement of fact, but I put it to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle that Governments of both complexions—I do not lay the blame just on the present Treasury Bench—have significantly ignored the death grant. More than anything else, the death grant causes great distress to retired people who worry in the twilight of their years about whether they will have sufficient funds put by to see them out of this world without imposing burdens on their relatives. Past Governments have been culpable in dealing with death grant, maternity benefit and certain other benefits.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle will not do justice to pensioners unless he finds some way of closing the difference between the inflation rate of 5 per cent. and earnings. It is not fair to have a system that protects pensioners—we welcome that—but guarantees that their standard of living consistently falls behind the standard of living of those in work. If we allow that policy to develop year on year, we shall inevitably get a two tiered society split between those who are in work and those who are not. An inexorable gap will grow. Whatever system we use—whether it is negative income tax or a fundamental tax system—we must address ourselves to that problem. Some people will be able to take advantage of the benefit of increased earnings while others will be restricted to increases as measured by the retail price index.

The Government have statistics and quantitative analyses, but they fall down on the qualitative side. Their approach to these matters leaves much to be desired. The retail price index is not an effective measure of the increased cost of living of the disadvantaged. Age Concern and similar groups have satisfied me that the retail price index is not a fair measure of the costs borne by pensioners and those who are out of work. Even though the Government have done as the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said, we should recognise that great difficulties must still be faced.

The hon. Member will not be surprised to hear that I entirely welcome his statement about the complexity of the benefit and tax systems. I endorse what he said about inadequate targeting for those most in need, although I would not follow his analysis completely. If we pressed this motion to a Division, I would have no difficulty in voting for it. I join the hon. Gentleman in his attack on the Government Front Bench, although I do not make light of the problems faced by the Under-Secretary.

People say that £40 billion is a lot of money—so it is, but it is necessary. I am not frightened of spending large sums of public money so long as I am satisfied that that money is well spent and that it will guarantee that our nation is not divided geographically, industrially, financially, socially and politically.

Apart from being worried about the Government's legislation, proposals and policies, I am worried about the Prime Minister's approach—whether she states it or not —and the public perception that she believes in a society that either shapes up or goes under. There may be an argument for that attitude when it is applied to industry, entrepreneurs, commerce or any of the aspects about which the right hon. Lady is an expert, but, if it is applied to the type of people who are covered by the tax and benefits system, it is wholly inappropriate. Whether the right hon. Lady likes it or not, she is stuck with the reputation of caring less rather than more for those on benefits. I believe that the majority of people perceive that attitude throughout the whole of her Government and in everything she touches.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): Will the hon. Gentleman compare the record of the Prime

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

Minister who has presided over a Government who have increased in real terms by 28 per cent. the social security budget — that includes significant increases in all the major benefits——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): More people on the dole.

Mr. Whitney: I welcome the hon. Gentleman, who has doubled the strength of the Labour party in the Chamber today. Will the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) compare the Labour Government's record with the record of this Government who have increased benefits for 800,000 new pensioners and for the unemployed and who have provided about £2·75 billion in real terms, in addition to the provision of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Kirkwood: Many more people are beneficiaries of the system. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. It sounds as though we are lapsing back into the old party political football match. It is true that the Government are spending more money. The public expenditure White Paper clearly shows that the amount has increased. I do not think that even the hon. Gentleman would deny that many people, especially those on long-term supplementary benefit, are experiencing difficulties because of the Government's tight fiscal monetarist policy. We can argue about whether that is the right or wrong policy. It is not fair for the hon. Gentleman to say, "We are spending all these extra funds" when the Government are spending that money because they are obliged to do so. The Government have been forced to act because of the growth in the unemployment benefit queues and the increased need for long-term supplementary benefit. I am not persuaded by the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle should have addressed himself to national financial policy —I accept that he could not—because we cannot take the tax and benefits system out of the context of the Government's national policies. I would be interested in persuading not only the Secretary of State but the Chancellor of the Exchequer to go for a degree of expansion. I would not go as far as some members of the official Opposition in terms of spending money and expanding the economy, but if the Government chose to go in a different financial direction at a national level it could have a significant impact. There is a great deal to be said for that.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle rightly said that we are at a crucial junction in terms of the direction that we shall take on benefits in the immediate future. In the middle of March the Budget will set out the Government's financial policy for the next year and we are simultaneously faced with what the Secretary of State for Social Services likes to call a new Beveridge review. I do not know what discussions the Minister has had with the Treasury, but the juxtaposition of those two will put an intolerable strain on the Civil Service.

I wonder whether the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the DHSS have got round a table to discuss the implications. If we are to believe some of the reports in the national newspapers in the past few weeks, the social security reviews are talking about taking £4 billion out of the social security budget. That will knock into a cocked hat the Chancellor of the Exchequer's contribution on 19 March. I wonder whether the operational arrangements being made by the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the DHSS will be co-ordinated in a way that can cope with all that.

My fear is that when the social security reviews are published we shall have precious little time before the Green Paper turns into a White Paper. We may even be lucky to have a White Paper before we have a Bill at the back end of the year. We shall be faced with a social security Bill which will be monumental in size and in the effect that it will have over the next few years. The debate this morning is crucial because if that happens, if no consideration is given to some of the options that will be discussed this morning—I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate because there are many options—and if the social security reviews do not leave open the option of integrating the tax and benefits system, the Government will be culpable of the most short-sighted piece of nonsense we shall have witnessed in this Parliament. I have no doubt that whatever refinement of the technique we adopt in the future the way forward is by integrating the tax and benefit system. It is not easy because it is a fundamental reform.

It is lunacy to have a panoply of DHSS computers chittering away to themselves in DHSS offices and an equal league of hardware in the Inland Revenue chittering away to itself. The two never talk to one another. When I go abroad, I find that people in other developed countries cannot understand why we do that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I seem to recall about 15 years ago when computers were first coming in — *[Interruption.]* There, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see the face of true democracy. People are not interested in the freedom of expression which we in the House uphold valiantly and dearly and will continue to uphold.

Before we were so rudely interrupted, I was seeking to ask the hon. Gentleman whether he was aware that about 15 years ago, when computers were first coming in, there was great public anxiety that somehow the Inland Revenue and those responsible for benefits would talk to each other. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the time is now right and that public awareness and anxiety about this are so great that the two should be brought together in the national interest?

Mr. Kirkwood: I fully accept that intervention. When we were initially talking about the integration and the computerisation of the two schemes, I was worried about the civil liberties implications of putting all the information together in one national data bank. The data protection laws go a long way to deal with that. There are some difficulties but I do not believe that they are insuperable. I should be prepared to pay the price of the difficulties that may arise over the civil liberties for a more integrated tax and benefit system.

My plea to the Minister this morning is that he does not close the door operationally, politically or in any other way on a system of integrated tax and benefits. If he does, he will close that option and he may do it in a way that may take years to unpick and stitch together again. We are at an important stage in the development of our tax credit system and I hope the Minister will take that on board.

Over the years, the Liberals have consistently advocated a tax credits system. It was tested by the

Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in 1982. I am aware that some Conservative Members have criticised it and said that it could not be afforded in terms of the high standard rates of tax that would be involved. The hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has berated me for this previously, but I am aware that it is only a system and not a panacea. If we had the system, we should have to be careful about how we set the rates to effect the redistribution that we believe is necessary. I believe that that is a sensible way forward although it is only one of many. I hope that the Minister and the House will consider it in the run-up to the Fowler reviews.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle for having raised this important subject. It was a better one than the last one he raised. I look forward to continuing debates on the subject in the House and to hearing what the Minister has to say.

10.37 am

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on introducing the subject. Its importance is plain, not just for the public expenditure implications but because the present system is so obviously unsatisfactory. My hon. Friend is right. The present social security system has few friends on the Right or Left of politics. There are other British institutions, such as the National Health Service, the BBC, Parliament, and even our education system, which are regarded with some tolerance and even affection. That is not true of the social security system, which is universally regarded as wasteful, inefficient and open to abuse. That is not the fault of those who work in the system.

Those who work in the DHSS offices are frequently dedicated and conscientious people. The fault lies with the system, which has been laid down layer upon layer over many years. The original purpose has been obscured. There is a strong feeling that many people who receive benefits do not deserve them while many people who deserve them are not receiving them. It is no good blaming the Government's stinginess, because, as the motion makes clear, most benefits have risen in real terms since they took office in 1979. Indeed, the dynamic of spending on social security threatens the Government's public expenditure strategy. I go further. Unless we address ourselves to real reform, the Government will simply fail in their efforts to control public expenditure.

What are we to do about it? I concede at once that it is a great deal easier to diagnose the disease than to prescribe a cure. However, I shall point the way to reform, and I certainly endorse the motion. I start with an observation that has already been made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), that the tax and social security systems must be integrated. In this country there are huge numbers of people in both systems. Often they are the same people. When Beveridge wrote his report, by and large there were two groups of people — taxpayers and claimants. It was entirely appropriate to deal with them in different ways, in different organisations. However, there is now a giant overlap caused by the lowering of income tax thresholds and the proliferation of benefits. But we still have those two giant empires that do not talk to one another. We have the Inland Revenue on the one hand and the social security system on the other, consisting of the Department of Health and Social Security offices, employment offices and, indeed, the local authority offices in so far as local authorities deal with housing benefit.

It must be sensible to find a way of merging or at least co-ordinating those two organisations and their functions. After all, what we are concerned about at the end of the day is whether someone pays money to the state or receives money back from the state. It is sensible to try to do so in one calculation and one assessment. That is particularly true if we wish to concentrate benefits on those in need. The tax system, as amended, could do that because the Inland Revenue, by definition, knows about our financial circumstances, and the same information could and should be used to assess eligibility for social security benefits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) mentioned child benefit. He was absolutely right to say that it is crazy that that benefit is paid in respect of about 12 million children and is costing over £4 billion a year. Most of that money goes to prosperous parents. If we could save on the money transferred to those parents, we might save about £3 billion a year. Let us compare that with the £1·5 billion a year that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is hoping to have available in this year's Budget. Of course, so that that money can be available, we need to means-test the benefit. If we could do that, the money released could be used either in increasing benefits to those in real need or in reducing taxation and raising income tax thresholds, or a mixture of both.

The phrase "means test" has notorious historical connotations due perhaps to the way in which benefits used to be adminstered before the war. However, every time I fill in an income tax return, I am undergoing a means test. Every time I am given an income tax coding, I am being given a means test. I suggest that we should use the same information, the same system, to run our benefit system, not only to assess eligibility for universal benefits such as child benefit, but to assess entitlement to benefits that are already means tested inefficiently, such as family income supplement.

I am not suggesting that those changes will be easy. The motion refers optimistically to

"the abolition of the poverty and unemployment traps."

I say "optimistically" because that feature of our system is more deeply impacted than most people realise. These traps are an extreme example of what happens when benefits are withdrawn as income increases and as the people concerned start to pay income tax as well. Effective marginal rates of taxation of over 100 per cent. are clearly unacceptable, but any system in which benefits are concentrated on those in need and are then withdrawn progressively as income increases will, I am afraid, mean rather high effective marginal rates of taxation. That fact must be faced. Of course, those high rates can be improved by flattening out the income band over which they are withdrawn — in other words, withdrawing them more slowly. The situation can be further improved by raising income tax thresholds. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer sticks to his strategy of raising income tax thresholds in the Budget.

The scheme that we are outlining would release the resources to enable such income tax thresholds to be raised substantially. I have mentioned a possible £3 billion that could be saved from means-testing child benefit, but the Institute of Fiscal Studies booklet, which has already been

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

mentioned in the debate, proposes a scheme whereby £10 billion might be made available. I have certain difficulties with the more radical parts of the IFS scheme. A total abandonment of the contributive principle may be right and logical, but people are attached to the concept that they should get only what they have contributed for. There is a problem here. It is true that the national insurance fund is something of a fraud. It is not actuarily sound—it never was. Logic tells me that we should make a clean break with the Beveridge system, but it must be accepted that there are problems if, for instance, existing or potential pensioners were told that contributions that they had been building up in good faith do not entitle them to the same pension that they had been expecting. That is suggested by the IFS scheme.

There is an alternative approach, which has already been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle. He called it a benefit plus system. Other people have suggested a similar social dividend system whereby people should, by virtue of citizenship, be eligible for flat rate universal benefits. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has ploughed a lonely furrow over past years in suggesting similar schemes. I am glad that he is here this morning, and I look forward to his contribution. However, I have difficulties with such a concept because if benefits are made available for all regardless of means, they are very expensive and have to be funded by high rates of marginal taxation on the rest of the working population. I have outlined the problems that I have with giving child benefits to all concerned. Most social dividend schemes suggest that such a concept should be extended rather than withdrawn.

If benefits are made universal, it is almost certain that those in real need will never receive enough. Therefore, I come down firmly in favour of a selective system and using the tax system to run and administer it. I have no problem with the idea that the tax system should therefore embrace everyone. For a start, everyone is already in one system or another. Everyone is either in the tax system or in the social security system, or both, so we are not suggesting a vast extension of bureaucracy. I do not recoil from the idea that everyone in the country should sign and send in a tax return at the end of the year. That is the American system. In the United States, the tax year runs from 1 January to 31 December. By the following 15 April, everyone must send in a signed tax return. Of course, employers collect tax on behalf of employees through the year, and taxpayers also have to account for certain other sorts of income periodically through the tax year.

At the end of the year, any over or underpayment is corrected by the return that the taxpayer fills in. He computes his liability and sends in a cheque with the form or makes a claim for repayment. That system is simpler and cheaper. In 1975, the last year for which I have figures, there were 74,000 Inland Revenue staff in Britain, whereas the Inland Revenue service in the United States employed 82,000 people who dealt with about six times as many tax returns. They do that by making the system a great deal simpler and by extended use of computers.

In a simple system, computers can do the repetitive work. When people send in their tax returns in America, they are initially put on magnetic tape. The computer checks for arithmetical errors and obvious omissions, and issues a provisional tax refund if appropriate. There is, of course, a labour-intensive part of the operation when tax returns are audited and problems are investigated, but they are kept to the minimum. That cheap system should be compared with ours, which is complex and labour intensive from start to finish.

Exactly the same is true of the social security system. We make insufficient use of computers. They are good at storing and retrieving information and doing calculations. The expensive bit is employing people who must make judgments, use their discretion and interview claimants. We have built up a system that depends on people laboriously checking and assessing claims.

Mr. Kirkwood: How does the annual system deal with urgent mid-year changes in domestic circumstances, which do not run on an annual basis?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The American system is different in that it does not run a PAYE system such as ours. We attempt to assess employees on a cumulative basis throughout the year whereas the American system is content to assess people weekly or monthly. That is why the year end tax return is essential to even out under and overpayments. Only at the end of the year can a taxpayer be certain that he has paid, or been refunded, his due entitlement for the previous year. If that is deemed to be a deficiency, I accept it, but I believe that the corresponding advantages of simplicity, cheapness and understandability outweigh its disadvantages.

A system that requires a signed tax return from everyone is necessary if we are to do something about the black economy. Some people are tolerant of the black economy, saying that it is the entrepreneurial economy and that we should turn a blind eye to it. I do not take that view and believe that it is frustrating for honest builders and garage owners to see work being creamed off by people who pay no tax and do not discharge their responsibilities. The least we can do for small businesses is ensure that they are not paying unnecessarily high taxes because their competitors are paying none. We shall not crack the black economy unless and until we require a signed tax return from everyone.

Taxes should be simple, low and rigorously enforced. I should be perfectly prepared to give our Inland Revenue powers similar to those enjoyed by its American equivalent if taxes were generally understood, generally accepted, and low.

Like others, I have called for a radical overhaul of the tax and social security systems. I should like the two to be merged, but above all I want simplification. I am not suggesting that the path of the reformer is easy, as there will always be net winners and net losers. We can be sure that anyone who gains from reform will keep quiet and that anyone who loses, even a few pence a week, will complain vociferously. A system in which there are no net losers would be prohibitively expensive. I urge the House not to be put off this daunting task. We must not be deterred from initiating at least public debate on these ideas. That is why this debate is useful. I again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle on his imaginative motion.

10.55 am

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) has just made

a characteristically thoughtful speech. I entirely endorse his approach to this pressing problem, as I do that of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), to whom we are all grateful, has done us a favour by enabling us to debate this inordinately complex topic in the relatively leisured calm of a Friday, when, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, we can conduct our debates in the rather more useful fashion that the other place employs for most of the week.

It is surprising that, when we are debating something that costs nearly one half of Government expenditure, so few right hon. and hon. Members are present. I am not making a party political point, but when the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) was in splendid isolation I intended to say that she was worth all the others who are not here put together. We are delighted to have been joined since by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We look forward to his no doubt trenchant speech.

All parties are anxious about this subject. The social security system cannot be regarded as satisfactory. I am certain that it would not have been regarded as satisfactory by its architect, Sir William Beveridge. It is worth examining the Beveridge report, now 40 years old, to see what problems that committee faced and how it tried to deal with them. When matters concerning the welfare state are debated, we often hear the myths of Dickensian England which are supposed to have predated our present system of social insurance. It is therefore somewhat surprising to read in the introduction to the Beveridge report, which surveyed social provision in advanced countries and recommended how matters could be improved, that its inquiry

"shows that provision for most of the many varieties of need through interruption of earnings and other causes that may arise in modern industrial communities has already been made in Britain on a scale not surpassed and hardly rivalled in any other country of the world."

However inadequate the system of social provision might have been until the second world war, it compared well with what was available elsewhere. We should therefore not consider the history of the welfare state as unhistorically and emotionally as we often do.

A second point is referred to in the introduction. It is often thought the system was rudimentary in those days. But it could be said that

"social insurance and the allied services as they exist today are conducted by a complex of disconnected administrative organs, proceeding on different principles, doing invaluable service but at a cost in money and trouble and the anomalous treatment of identical problems for which there is no justification."

If one starts from those two standpoints and examines how the system today measures up, we can come to two conclusions. First of all, unlike in 1944, the British social security system now is not one of the best in the world. Secondly, we seem to have got no further in getting out of this complex maze of administrative muddle and inordinate expense, which is the prime characteristic of our current system.

Far from moving forward in the past 40 years, in the administrative principles that underlie the system, we have moved back. The time is right—I am glad that the Government have recognised this—for a comprehensive review of the entire social security system. I applaud and congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Health and Social Security on having instituted the welfare and benefit reviews that are being undertaken.

The social security and welfare system that we have today has been well described by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle as irrational, arbitrary and unfair. I would add that it is discriminatory and anti-social. Extraordinary as it may seem when we are spending tens of billions of pounds a year on social security the benefit entitlement is based not on need but on a variety of irrelevant characteristics. That is the fundamental failure of the system, and why it fails to provide for those who are deeply in need, and wastes resources and taxpayers' money on spreading benefits far too wide among people who cannot seriously be said to be in need.

Here are some of the irrelevant characteristics found in the system. For example, if one is incapacitated at work, one is treated differently from how one would be if one were incapacitated at birth. A disabled wife is treated differently from a disabled husband. Teenagers have a variety of different characteristics that might alter the benefit entitlements that they can get. For example, the benefit entitlement of a teenager depends on whether he is in full-time education, part-time education, vocational training, in work or registered for work. These characteristics are all important, but they do not go to the heart of the problem of providing for social need, which is the need itself—the inadequacy of earning power or other resources and means available to the individual to assuage the economic problems by which he is beset. Those haphazard elements in administration of the system must be ironed out.

The system fails in a second way through the rates of benefit, which are equally anomalous and unprincipled. For example, in 1948, unemployment benefit was set at a level that equalled retirement pensions. In the past 36 years, unemployment benefit has declined as a proportion of the retirement pension until today unemployment benefit is 25 per cent. less than the retirement pension. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire pointed out this feature of the system when he was talking about pensions.

I do not know whether there has been a deliberate decision to reduce the unemployment benefit to that proportion of old-age pensions, and I very much doubt it. One of the great problems of the system is that it has developed ad hoc over the years, with no central strategy or objective in view, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wells pointed out. We must devote our attention to this, although I doubt very much that the optimism of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will be fulfilled and a Bill will be introduced in the next Session. If his optimism is well founded, it will probably be a bad Bill, because the system requires much greater examination and thought than can be put in in the time available to bring in a Bill before next Session. We need a full examination of both the administrative system and the rates of benefit to decide how a rational and logical system might be created.

The other side of the coin of the benefits system, as the motion points out, is the tax system, which is similarly a mess of incomprehensibility. I have some qualifications in revenue law, and have for a long time been aware of how many people derive large incomes out of the incomprehensibility of the present system. While I do not

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think that we are ever likely to introduce full comprehensibility into the tax system, or even insert much more logic into it than exists now, we need to take into account the anomalies that the tax system produces in so far as they impinge on the benefit and welfare systems.

One of the most extraordinary characteristics of the income tax system, which is supposed to be progressive, is the extent to which, in practice, it is not so at all. For example, although we have high theoretical marginal rates for income tax at relatively moderate income levels—60 per cent. — in practice, the actual rate suffered by taxpayers is less than that. On the other hand, for those on low incomes, absurdly high rates of tax are levied—39 per cent. on very low incomes. The poverty and unemployment traps that have been eloquently referred to this morning mean that on low incomes there are marginal rates of tax of well over 100 per cent.; that produces the many and severe problems about which we have been talking this morning.

An excellent review of the social security system and the various options available for reforming it was published last year by the Social Affairs Unit. It was written by Mrs. Hermione Parker, who is a well-known authority on this subject, and was entitled "Action on Welfare". She produced tables showing that poverty traps are created and how one cannot escape from a proverty trap unless one can secure employment at levels of income that are unlikely to be attained by the people in that position. They are in a trap from which they cannot escape.

For example, somebody with an ordinary family will be no better off in work than out of work unless he is receiving an income well above the average wage. To be £20 better off in work than out of work, as a single non-householder one has to have a job paying £79 a week. As a single householder, one has to earn £112 a week; as a single-wage married couple one has to earn £136 a week; if one has two children, one has to earn £165 a week; and if one has four children, one has to earn £189 a week before one can take a job and be £20 a week better off than if one is unemployed.

No system with that characteristic can be regarded as rational or sane. A system that effectively prevents people from becoming employed because they cannot afford to be so — unless they are driven into the black economy about which my hon. Friend the Member for Wells spoke —must have some major surgery carried out on it.

With our social security system, we have managed to achieve the pauperisation of a large part of the population —that is, a combination of poverty with dependence on public relief. It is that feature of our society, which makes poverty endemic and incurable in its present form, that it is the historic task of our Government to sweep away.

Our welfare state is largely an exercise in carrying coals to Newcastle, because state services are paid for by relatively modest earners and people who, by almost universal admission, could be regarded as poor. They are paying out on the one hand for services that they are receiving on the other, and the only effect of the system is to remove choice from them altogether and place it in the hands of Government officials.

I very much hope that our Government will take the kind of radical attitude that is required to change the whole system of welfare, social security, health and education provision. I am calling for an even more radical policy than that called for by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. I am sure that, if he were here, he would be surprised to hear that statement, as he imagines that no one could possibly be more radical than he is. If the problems are to be solved, we have to look at the whole area of Government policy in the provision of education, health and welfare services and see it as a whole.

Since 1949, the incidence of taxation in Britain has changed remarkably, and in one direction: it has changed against the interests of the lower paid. In 1949, the top 1·5 per cent. of tax units contributed 51 per cent. of the revenues and income tax. In 1978-79, 30 years later, the top 13·4 per cent. of tax units contributed only 46·1 per cent. Those on low and moderate incomes have come to pay an increasing proportion of tax revenues. That is the fundamental fault and flaw of the present system. The tax system bites at far too low a level, where it competes with benefits and produces the intolerable result that people cannot afford to take work.

In the 30 years between 1950 and 1980, on the other hand, national insurance contributions revenue rose twice as fast as income tax revenue. I cannot think of a more regressive way of altering our tax system than to achieve the two factors to which I have just referred. It is partly achieved by the limit on national insurance contributions of £250 a week, but that is not the whole story.

It is because people start to pay income tax and national insurance contributions at such a low level of income that we produce the dreadful problem of there being no real safety net for working people. The safety net, in so far as it applies, applies only to those who are out of work, because the supplementary benefit regulations exclude anyone in work. On the other hand, there is nothing to stop the working poor being trapped below supplementary benefit levels by taxation.

In 1949, at the birth of the Beveridge system, a married man with two children could earn twice the supplementary benefit level before being liable to income tax. Today, by contrast, people are liable to income tax if they are earning 25 per cent. below supplementary benefit entitlement. Therefore, we are institutionalising poverty by the tax and benefit system: on the one hand, it fails to provide adequately for the needy, and on the other hand it encourages fecklessness and imprisons people in cages not of their own making.

Another appalling feature of the tax-benefit system is the way that it penalises marriage and subsidises the break-up of the family. As someone who has only recently acquired a wife, I realised, being a tax barrister, that it was not a very tax-efficient investment. Nevertheless, I was persuaded that the course in the long term might provide me with benefits which my short-term interests would not exceed. The present benefit system encourages cohabitation rather than marriage, and encourages families to split up rather than stay together. The result has been to produce the problems of one-parent families, which are now very considerable. In 1960, £15 million—a very small sum—was spent on providing for the problems of the one-parent family. That £15 million has grown to £1,000 million.

The system also encourages working wives, because they can earn up to £39 a week tax-free. In Mrs. Parker's view, expressed in the pamphlet to which I have already

referred, on marriage, a British woman becomes a non-person for tax purposes and a second-class citizen for supplementary benefit purposes. I do not believe that we can tolerate that position any longer.

Supplementary benefit levels for married and cohabiting couples are lower than for two single persons sharing the same accommodation, so once again we seem to be discriminating against the family unit, which I thought it was one of the principal aims of the Government to support.

I believe that all the features that I have mentioned destabilise society and are an encouragement to fraud. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wells that the black economy is not something to be admired, for the reasons that he explained. People regard it as unfair and it encourages a laxity of moral standards, and that has repercussions well outside the area of the tax system.

I believe that the present system discourages parental authority and encourages everybody to believe that the state will provide. That makes our society much more atavistic and it is at the root of many of the social and legal problems that we face elsewhere.

It is absurd that between 20 million and 30 million people in Britain qualify for benefits. That figure must surely be far beyond any genuine concept of need. There is now an absolute necessity to revise the system so as to put the searchlight on those who are in need and not to spread the benefits over the whole country, to the exclusion of those who need them.

The system must be incomprehensible, because over 1 million families below the supplementary benefit level of income are not claiming their benefits. Although it was at one time often found that people refused to claim benefits to which they were entitled because they did not want to be thought to be on charity, I cannot believe that that mistaken view of entitlement is very common today. I think that people do not understand the system, that they are intimidated by it, and that that increases their sense of hopelessness and helplessness. But those who are smart and clever can milk the system in a way that makes it more difficult for us to justify the system of social provision.

Therefore, my first criticism of the system is that it is incomprehensible, and my second criticism is that it is unco-ordinated. There is not a strategy or a definition of objectives. It accounts for about a third or more of public expenditure. If we do not have a strategy or statement of objectives for such a large tranche of public money, we can never solve the problems that the Government have set themselves the task of solving — cutting Government spending so as to cut taxation, encourage enterprise and eliminate poverty.

The system is costly to administer. We now spend over £2,000 million a year on administering the DHSS, the Inland Revenue and the Manpower Services Commission. That is equivalent to 2p off income tax, 2p off VAT or, to be controversial, the cost of subsidising the National Coal Board in a normal year. The cost of that useless administration is an absolute cost upon the people of Britain from which they derive no benefit at all. The national insurance and social benefits system involves 90 million manual entries per week; PAYE and national insurance contributions account for another 25 million manual entries.

The system has failed over the past 40 years. It needs to be swept away and reproduced in a different form to meet the fundamental objectives that Beveridge set it. In my view, the way in which we do that is to make it selective.

I agree with my hon. Friend's views about child benefit. It is lunacy that we should spend between £4,000 million and £5,000 million a year on a benefit which is universally available when probably 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. at most of the recipients really need it. This robbing Peter to pay Paul—or rather, robbing Peter to pay Peter back — produces the poverty and unemployment traps because, to pay it, we have to have unacceptably high levels of income tax and unacceptably low thresholds of income tax, so we are making the problem endemic and incapable of solution so long as we retain it. The same applies to free school meals, welfare milk and heating additions for families with children under five—all are benefits without selectivity and universally available.

The Institute of Directors, with which formerly I had a connection, has produced some responses to the consultation papers on the reform of the benefit system which I have no doubt my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has seen. Calculations by the institute's policy unit show that, if child benefit were abolished for those above the tax threshold and converted instead into a tax allowance, while the cash benefit would still be available for those below the tax threshold, we could increase the tax threshold for a married man with four children to £7,303. That would be a dramatic increase in the threshold, which would remove the poverty trap for a considerable number of people. We would do it by giving a tax allowance of child benefit grossed up for tax purposes, so that it would be £1,127 per child.

All sorts of benefits are available on the same basis as child benefit. My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was telling me, as he is about to become a father, that his wife had just received her forms for claiming maternity grants and maternity allowances. I have no idea what my hon. Friend's financial position is; although I understand that it improved greatly as a result of his marriage — unlike mine, which went the other way — but he said to me that it was ludicrous that he should be in receipt of maternity grant or maternity allowances. He did not want them. He wanted to refuse them. He could not. There is no way in which anyone can say, "I do not want this benefit," because the computer tells the relevant Department that the money is to be paid and a cheque comes through the post.

I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the death grant. Here is another benefit, if it can be so described, which is universally obtainable. It has remained at £30 for so many years that it is completely useless to most people who can qualify for it. But there is very real distress amongst old people who have very small resources of their own. If that benefit were not provided universally for everyone but targeted on those in economic need, we would be able to solve a great many of these problems. That would be a humane system, whereas at the moment we have an inhumane one.

The failure of the present Government is that they have not been able to control public expenditure and, as a result, they have failed to make any real inroads into the tax system. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister admitted as much when she was interviewed on the Brian Walden programme just over a year ago. She said that the aim of the Government during this period of Parliament was not

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to reduce Government spending and taxation but to hold the totals. She said that that was the real objective that we could set ourselves, and no more.

We are in that position, where we have not been able to achieve the ideals that we set ourselves five years ago, because we have not yet got to grips with this great juggernaut of social security and the welfare state. We cannot hope to see any significant reductions in taxation unless we privatise parts of the welfare state, in the same way as we have privatised parts of the state holdings in industry.

Surprisingly, in this area we need to institute Keynesian policies. A lot of rubbish is talked about Keynes. It is not often realised that he was an opponent of the kind of system of social provision and Government intervention that we have now. In a document which is perhaps not well or widely read today but which achieved some celebrity in its day—a tract entitled "The End of Laissez-Faire" —Keynes said:

> "The most important Agenda of the state relate not to those activities which private individuals are already fulfilling but to those functions which fall outside the sphere of the individual, to those decisions which are made by no one if the state does not make them. The important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are already doing and to do them a little better or a little worse: but to do those things which are not done at all."

That is the fundamental principle which should inform the welfare state and the basis of government. The Government are spending vast amounts of taxpayers' money doing worse than individuals would be able to do for themselves and what they would naturally want to do and be able to do if they were not taxed at such a rate that they no longer have the resources available to them to take their own independent decisions.

The result of this has been far from enfranchising the working class and those on low incomes. It has pauperised them through the welfare state and it has prevented them from taking independent courses of action in education and in health which are available only to those on very high incomes. That is a disgraceful state of affairs for a Conservative Government to continue to tolerate.

If large numbers of us are paying for our own benefits more or less, we have to ask ourselves why we must have them controlled by people in Government offices and why we cannot buy them ourselves. Let us consider various forms of pension, for example. The problems that will beset us over the state pension early in the next century are enormously difficult. If we are not careful and if we do not take evasive action at this stage, by the time that most of us in the Chamber are ready to claim our old-age pensions we shall have to depend upon very much higher rates of tax being imposed upon the wage and salary earners of that distant date. The difficulties that we now face in paying for the welfare state, social security benefits, and so on will affect the pensions element as well.

I think that we should emancipate ordinary people. By following a vigorous policy of private provision, subject to a real safety net provided by the state for those who are unable to provide for themselves, we should give back to individuals the right to govern their lives and take decisions on matters which are of the most fundamental importance to any individual—the provisions for health, welfare, old age and so on.

The present system also has a deleterious effect upon our political system. The electoral bribery which one party or the other has adopted as the main basis of its policy ever since the war and probably before it has had extremely bad results for the political system. It started a long time ago, with the birth of the present national insurance system. If I may say so without offending the sensibilities of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, I think that it was when Lloyd George promised ninepence for fourpence in 1908. He debased the currency of British politics by promising some benefit which could not be achieved unless it was paid for mythically by someone else, whereas in practice it was paid for by the individuals themselves. He started this system of electoral bribery, from which we have suffered ever since. This is the problem that we face in pensions. We are pushing off on to tomorrow the problems which we can see will afflict us today. As a result, we hope that someone else will pay — our children or grandchildren — and that is fundamentally immoral.

We need to establish a social security system on the basis of Beveridge. At the moment we have the reverse of that. The Beveridge report foresaw the need for a social security system withering away.

Today the social security welfare system costs a hundred times more than it did in Beveridge's day. During that period inflation has gone up only by a factor of 10, so the social security welfare system today is 10 times as large, in real terms, as it was 40 years ago. In part, that is entirely supportable. It is right that as the national income grows in real terms, poverty in relative terms as well as in absolute terms should be relieved. But absolute poverty today is very much lower than it was in 1948, whereas relative poverty is ineradicable. Therefore, there is a limit to the extent to which that objective can be achieved. I very much agree on that point with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr Howell). We must institute a fundamental realignment of the benefit and tax system in the way that has been proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and we must do so before the welfare state becomes the farewell state.

If we do not adopt the radical approach that has been adverted to by all Conservative Members in this debate, we shall bring about for the future a continuation of problems that have no cure and that will make even more intractable the other economic difficulties with which this country is beset. We cannot divorce the one from the other. If we are to reduce taxation, which I believe is essential if we are to preserve the economic prospects of this country, we must reduce public spending. If we do not tackle the problems of the welfare state we shall be unable to reduce public spending. Furthermore, if we do not tackle those problems we shall perpetuate poverty and need and we shall be unable to do what any sane and humane Government should seek to do, namely, to relieve the problems which face those in our society who are least able to deal with them.

11.32 am

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I am particularly grateful, as I am sure is the whole House, to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) for selecting the taxation and benefit system for our debate this morning. I am rather glad that the House is not so full that hon. Members need

to feel under pressure to make incomprehensibly short speeches in order to make room for the speeches of other hon. Members.

I should like to start my speech by making the point that the relationships, expressed in cash, are in fact human relationships: the expression, in concrete terms, of our sense of obligation towards one another and what is due to ourselves as British citizens. We must not allow inhuman ideas to enter into this relationship — the redistribution of income, which is the modern way of holding the whole of society together in a structure of mutual obligations and entitlements; but we have to make radical changes as quickly as we can.

We now have the income tax and national insurance contribution on the one side and the various systems of benefit operated by central and local government on the other. Each of these has reached the stage of incomprehensibility and near administrative breakdown.

We in this country have a redistribution of income industry consisting of many tens or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of people, all of whom are doing difficult and dedicated work without adding a single pound to the real value of the national product. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who has just concluded an extremely thoughtful and interesting speech, mentioned the fact that in the administration of national insurance and supplementary benefit it is necessary every week for the staff of the Department of Health and Social Security to make more than 90 million manual entries. We cannot expect those dedicated people to achieve a really satisfactory administrative structure when we ask them to perform within the confines of such a completely out of date administrative machine. The pay-as-you-earn system is a heavy burden not only for the Inland Revenue but for employers large and small all over the country, particularly small employers and employers whose workers tend to have variable incomes from week to week for one reason or another.

The whole House, I believe, is therefore agreed upon the immediate urgency of the need for reform. The income tax system is cumbrous, incomprehensible and discriminatory. National insurance bears no relationship to a true insurance scheme because there is no correspondence between contributions and benefits. There are also three different bases for entitlement to benefit, citizenship, with particular reference to child benefit, contributions, which interfere with the calculation of pensions, unemployment benefit and sickness entitlement; and the huge supplementary benefit system underneath it all, which relates to people's proof of need. It is disastrous that at this time there should be more than 7 million people in this country who are dependent upon supplementary benefit through proof of need. That alone is a drag on society which urgently needs to be reformed. We cannot go on as we are.

I believe that in the 20th century two very important changes have taken place which, in the time-span that we can contemplate, are probably quite irreversible. The first is the coming of universal suffrage. Many people forget that universal suffrage for men was attained only at the end of the 1920s. We no longer have a society in which there is an upper crust of self-reliant, independent people with their own resources who are able to make their own choices, and a large, supportive mass of people, as in Victorian times, who had to take the orders they were given and who have very little opportunity to think or to plan their lives for themselves. In other words, because of this change, we have got to stop playing Normans and Saxons in welfare, just as much as we have in the creation of wealth.

The other major change which I believe to be irreversible, and I hope that it is, is the emancipation of women. We have to move to a single, one-to-one universal tax system. Also, in benefits, we have to treat each citizen as having equal personal obligations and equal personal rights to benefits. I would not want it to be thought that in saying that I am trying to attack the institution of the family, which I believe is vitally important and must be sustained in every way. That is one of the reasons why I do not agree with colleagues who attack the idea of child benefit. There are very many reasons why all over western Europe the child benefit system is part of the plan for the redistribution of income and there are very many reasons why we too adopted that system. Therefore, I believe that those who are campaigning against child benefit are making a very grave mistake. However, in the reform of the redistribution of income we must not only recognise these fundamental changes which have taken place in society. We must also aim at an acceptable moral basis for the transfer of resources between citizens during the whole of their life cycle. We should know why we want to help people with families, if we do. We should know why we believe it to be necessary to keep people in dignity in old age. We should have a clear idea of what obligations we have to the disabled, the chronically sick and other minority groups. The redistribution of income must be something that people accept because it gives expression to the type of society in which they wish to live.

We must also insist upon transparent, obvious simplicity of administration. I should like everybody in the country to be able to work out their income tax and their entitlement to benefits in their heads in a matter of seconds. There is no reason why we should not achieve a system of that kind if we could only start by thinking clearly when we set out on the reform. The benefits that we give must always be enough to ensure a minimum standard of living. That, surely, is axiomatic.

Dealing with the tax side, what really is the ideal for the tax system? What should we be trying to achieve? I am not sure that what we really want is the full integration of tax and benefit into a single net operation. It is possible to imagine that by the use of computers one could produce a system under which what people put in and what people drew back was calculated simultaneously so that at the end of the operation only one payment was made in one direction or another. I believe that we lose the transparency of the system if we go that far. A tax cut or a benefit increase are, of course, the same thing. A tax increase, or a loss of benefit, are also the same thing. We must add up the pluses and we must add up the minuses and see what we get at the end. We must not imagine that a tax cut is better than a benefit increase, or vice versa. But, that having been said, the payment of contributions is a separate function from the drawing of entitlements. It is helpful if that is always clear. We should, at any rate, be able to discern a bedrock of principle, even if we modify the administration to suit our convenience.

We need simultaneous reform of the income tax system and the structure of benefits rather than integration.

First, we need to end all the remaining negative tax allowances. We made a big start when we got rid of the child tax allowance. We should now get rid of all the

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others so that income tax becomes a flat, equal deduction from each citizen's income, regardless of age, sex or family commitment. The payment of tax is the way in which we clear our debt to society. Everyone should make whatever contribution they can through the tax system. We should make contributions according to our capacity and draw benefits according to our need.

Secondly, we must decide what to do about the national insurance contribution which is now earnings-related and collected through the same mechanism as pay-as-you-earn, yet for old time's sake we differentiate and try to pretend that the system has not changed. Should we abandon the insurance principle altogether? My personal view is that we should not, but we need to grow up in our conception of insurance. It would be better to end income tax and to call it a contribution — perhaps a national insurance contribution — so that the redistribution of income can be constituted as a self-balancing budget.

I oppose the Treasury idea that we should not introduce hypothecation in the way in which the national budget is managed. There is great merit in a system under which the yield from the taxation of income is made to balance—if possible on a year-on-year basis—with the outgoings for the payment of benefits. If we achieve a system in which the yield from tax on income is made to balance with the expenditure on benefits we shall attain two advantages. First, the average citizen over the course of his life would balance his personal account with the community. From birth to death the average citizen's contribution, when he is able to contribute, and his drawings, when he needs benefit, would come precisely into balance. Secondly, the popular demand for better benefits would come into balance with the popular demand for lower deductions from income. Discussions about the level of benefit and the rate of contributions would be held on the basis of comprehension and transparency, if the redistribution of income budget were kept separate from the rest of the Government's accounts.

My next remarks are controversial. I should like a completely non-cumulative tax system so that we do not need to keep annual, monthly or even weekly records of a person's income. The administrative advantages of abandoning higher rate tax are so great that it is worth doing in spite of the political hubbub that it would cause. It would be enormously beneficial to the economy. I cannot imagine who would lose by it. Hong Kong is an example. Why is it that in that part of the world capitalism is such an amazing, runaway success when in western Europe it is flagging, with high unemployment, failure to invest, failure to do research and a general loss of tone? If we abandoned the higher rate tax we should do something constructive to make the economy a success. However, something would have to go with that: we need a historic compromise if we are to make that change. We must have a basic income guarantee. No one should be allowed to sink through a floor which is adequate and generous and gives people their self-respect, but everyone must be allowed to rise as high as he can. That was Winston Churchill's fine concept. We should not be afraid to implement it.

Mr. Ralph Howell What level is suggested? At a certain level it might act as a disincentive to people to work.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I shall come to recommendation about the level of tax shortly. resentment were caused by the creation of large perso fortunes there might be a case for a steeper incidence tax on the transfer of capital assets from one person another.

The yield from the higher rate of tax is not very lar I tabled some parliamentary questions on the subject long ago. If the highest rate of tax were brought down 40 per cent. the loss of revenue would be well under billion. After a year or two that loss of revenue would more than recouped because people would set out mu harder to earn more money. I cannot see that that wo lead to a loss of incentive. If people had larger fortu they would not want to stop work. I am not afraid of th

Hon. Members on both sides of the House clamouring for a rise in tax thresholds. In advance almost every Budget hon. Members argue in favour taking people out of the tax system. As people incre their incomes they rise into the pay-as-you-earn syst and become an administrative burden. The next year th are thrown out at the bottom of the scale. In Budget af Budget since the war rises in the tax threshold have be made and then proved to be useless as people worked th way back up into the tax bracket.

I do not think that the Chancellor has available revenue to reduce taxation or to reduce the tax thresh in a way that would significantly change the proble caused by the poverty trap or by the lack of incentive increase earnings. We must do our homework on question of thresholds. Much of the work has already be done and is well known.

The problem is caused by the double incidence of means test, which reduces people's benefits as th increase their income, and income tax, which takes av part of their income as they improve their earnings. Th is a double loss through the payment of income tax and loss of benefit. When that happens simultaneously tens thousands of people find that they have little incentive increase their incomes.

Do we solve the problem by trying to take all low p taxpayers out of tax—an expensive operation in ter of loss of revenue — or do we remove them fr liability to the means test for their base benefits? present just under 4 million people have to cla supplementary benefit. Surely it is better to treat th selectively than to try to tackle the incentive disadvanta by taking every taxpayer out of taxation at the lower rat There are ingenious schemes for tackling the problem changing the national insurance contribution rather th the tax levels. But on principle there is much to be s for leaving people's benefits intact instead of trying make two classes of earners—those on low income w do not have to pay tax and those on higher incomes w are within the tax system.

If we withdraw benefits by means of personal case w by officials we shall create a large subordinate populat who regard themselves as second-rate citizens. however, we withdraw part of marginal income using agency of employers through the operation of income we shall not humiliate those people. To take margi income away through the income tax is not an insult t person's self-respect.

For many administrative and social reasons we sho examine more carefully the idea of taking people ou tax by raising the tax threshold. Personally, I think that

should be going the other way, and should try to ensure that every pound makes its contribution to society. We should have a basic income guarantee which is, for the most part, left intact as people improve their circumstances and increase their incomes. Leaving some people with their gross income intact but cutting into their benefit instead makes two nations—those in work and those in need. To leave people with their basic benefits intact, as they improve their circumstances, is to unite the nation both in liability for tax and eligibility for benefit. The administrative advantages in reducing the case work for supplementary benefit are overwhelming.

What should we be doing on the benefits side? We have three roots of entitlement: citizenship, contributions and need. If we amalgamated income tax and national insurance contribution, we would gain by that. Then we must try to reduce to the minimum the number of people who have to apply for help on grounds of need. If between 7 million and 8 million people are at present dependent on supplementary benefit for their living standard, we should aim to reduce that figure to one tenth as quickly as possible. Otherwise we shall again build the concept of two nations, those in work and those in need, and find ourselves back in the 1840s when Disraeli pointed to the disadvantages of that social structure.

Ideally, if we were to have a basic income guarantee, we could treat everyone in the same way for benefits. Indeed, that is not a pipe dream. Although I do not like our welfare system, it mercifully gives virtually everyone a basic income guarantee. Few people have actually to fall below the supplementary benefit level. However, we achieve that result only through an administrative and social nightmare.

I shall now clear up some misconceptions about the basic income guarantee. The first misconception is that the scheme is a lovely idea but impossibly expensive. There is no need to increase the average level of spending power of our citizens to provide a basic guarantee because we already have a welfare system which in practice provides that guarantee. We can change the administration of the redistribution of income, but we do not have to add to the overall cost in so doing. We could even alter the minimum level of income. However we set about it, it is possible to introduce a basic income guarantee on a revenue-neutral basis. Some people may gain and others lose, but the reform can be introduced so that there is no net extra burden on the Exchequer and no overall addition to spending power.

Simultaneously, we must recognise that it is unwise to imagine that by reforming the redistribution of income we shall find room for huge savings. If some taxpayers are made much better off through administrative reform, another category of people will have less money to spend. One must find out whether one should change the relative spending power of different groups, especially minorities who tend to be forgotten, when one approaches reforms of this nature. I urge all hon. Members not to hope that through the reform of the administration of the redistribution of income we can find ways of vastly reducing income tax, because that it not possible.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that every citizen, however rich, should be paid a basic benefit? Would that not be open to the same objection as child benefit, which everyone receives, and which is very expensive without solving the problem of child poverty?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Child benefit is not expensive in that it could be described as a way of reducing people's income tax. We have a universal method, under which those who pay tax receive child benefit in lieu of the old William Pitt child tax allowances which were introduced at the start of the system in 1798. Those who are not lucky enough to have an income of their own receive the same amount in contribution towards the minimum income guarantee of their household. Child benefit is a simple way of giving taxpayers and those without income enough money to spend on their children's welfare without case work.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I do not think that it is desirable for me to give way as I have already spoken too long and still have many things to say.

A second misconception about the basic income guarantee proposal is that we cannot make any move until computerisation of PAYE and the Department of Health and Social Security is complete. In other words, we must postpone the idea for many years, possibly even to the Greek kalends. Both the Inland Revenue and the DHSS are completely wrong in their approach to computerisation. They are working in isolation from each other on two aspects of the same problem and, what is worse, they are asking computer operators how they can adapt the computer so that it will perpetuate our present extraordinary system, which has developed during hundreds of years. Instead, we should say, "Now that we have computers, what can we do in administration that we could not do before?" The two departments should be striking out into completely radical methods of handling the redistribution of income, instead of calling computers in to perpetuate the existing appalling muddles.

Thirdly, we must clear up the idea that the marginal tax rate for a basic income guarantee must be so impossibly high that it would produce a disincentive effect that would run the economy down. There is no reason why tax should take up more than it does at present, since we already provide a basic income guarantee. I recommend a standard basic rate of income tax — or national insurance contribution—of 40 per cent. On top of that employers should be required to pay a flat rate of 10 per cent. to the provision of income for retirement. That would make a total of 50 per cent., which people may regard as a high percentage to take from income. However, that is only what we do at present and, therefore, the change is not a sudden one. Indeed, it does not constitute a significant change except—I emphasise this necessity—that we must put aside more money from current expenditure into savings. Our children will not honour the commitments that we are writing into our present legislation. When we retire they will ask what we did in our time for pensioners that makes us insist on their meeting all these commitments for us. It is extremely dangerous to expect our children to honour the pension promises that we are making to ourselves. I strongly emphasise the need for employers' contribution to the national insurance system to be turned wholly towards the accumulation of real personal savings, not to be taken into the Exchequer and used as part of the total yield of revenue.

Regarding the level of benefits under a basic income guarantee, it would be ideal if everyone's BIG was equal to the present level of supplementary benefit. However, I

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do not recommend that. We do not need to pay a basic income guarantee which is equal to the present level of supplementary benefit for everyone, because of the liberating effects on the labour market of the sort of reforms that I recommend, especially the ending of national insurance restrictions on people taking work while they are still receiving benefit.

The black economy should be made legitimate, so that if people find casual or part-time work or can earn money on the side through odd-jobbing, they may. It can only add to the total wealth of society if everyone who gets an opportunity to take work can work without being told that they are scrounging, evading tax or falling into some reprobate activity.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I am sorry that I did not make myself clear when I intervened previously. My hon. Friend said that the minimum income guarantee scheme would be self-financing. Will he tell the House at what level it would be now? If we have no idea of that, the argument has little strength.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: It is difficult to give the figures. I have made scores of calculations, and the honourable name of Mrs. Hermione Parker has already been mentioned. It is possible to produce a budget in which there are specific figures, and I should be glad to give them to my hon. Friend. It is not that I am afraid to do so, but that I would speak until the House rises if I dealt with every aspect of these recommendations.

However, we must ensure that the present level of supplementary benefit is paid to those who cannot fend for themselves. It should be available to those who have genuinely tried but failed to find work. In some parts of the country, even the best-hearted and most willing workers cannot find work even to earn a few extra pounds a week. I do not recommend that they should be pushed below the supplementary benefit level, but speaking from my observations in central London, I believe that few able-bodied people could not supplement their incomes, if they were allowed to do so, by £10 or £20 a week; even with the present state of the labour market. They should be given every encouragement to do so, instead of being made to feel that they are doing something wrong.

We must minimise case work by seeking out the categories to which we wish to grant a higher rate of basic benefit, and that must include children, the chronically sick and the pensioners. May I say a few words about pensioners? I said that employers should put a minimum of 10 per cent. of salaries into personal pension funds for all their employees. We should aim for a money purchase build-up of entitlement founded on the system of, "save now, pay tax later."

The taxation of pension funds is a topical subject. In due course, the availability of earnings-related income from a lifetime's achievement of savings should largely replace, for retired people, the necessity to apply for special assistance with their housing costs. However, I recognise that that will not happen all at once. We must give every encouragement to the build-up of personal entitlement through savings, and employers must make a significant contribution. In my calculation, 10 per cent. is barely enough, but I hesitate now to recommend a larger proportion. Of course, many employers already put m more than 10 per cent. into occupational pension sche and we must do nothing to discourage that.

I shall not support the Chancellor of the Exchequ he is thinking of introducing tax on pension sche except in one important respect to which I shall return. state earnings-related scheme should be ended, and should rely on a system of, "save now, pay tax la There should be an earnings-related build-up of f either through employers' schemes or through a Office scheme which could be made available for s employers or casual workers so that they, too, can the benefit of a personal build-up by week on top of earnings.

Pension trusts should be required to return accounts to the registrar making a clear distin between their allocated funds, which are the proper the individuals for whom the trust was set up, and unallocated reserves, which are still in effect a pa company funds and are not allocated to indivi beneficiaries. I suggest that the tax which the Chanc is thinking of imposing on pension funds should be le on the income derived from the unallocated reserves o pension funds, but not, under any circumstances, on allocated funds. By this means, we shall encou occupational pension schemes to make full transfer va available for early leavers, including the full amou existing accrued rights held in the pension trusts. should also put group occupational schemes on a pari tax treatment with all the different personal sav schemes that we wish to encourage. They inc contracts for the self-employed and supplemen contracts for those in employment who wish to add to savings while they are working. We must also encou Monory-type schemes, which will enhance the prov of nest-eggs, investment clubs and portable pension

All of those schemes should be operated under the tax regime. If the Chancellor has it in mind, I woul prepared to vote that the unallocated part of pension f should be taxed to encourage trustees to allocate reso in the final salary schemes over time—or even stroke—to convert them into money purchase sch based on individual entitlement.

If we are to put basic personal benefits on a u basis, we must recognise that the householder has a gr obligation than the others who live in the same h Therefore, we must introduce a householder's allow that can be claimed by only one member of the house but without reference to that person's income, se status. We do not need to know whether that pers single, married, cohabiting, widowed or divorced, bu must ascertain whether he or she is the householder. person should then be entitled to a household allowance on top of their personal allowance, preferably the scheme should be administered by authorities.

We shall have to continue a supplementary housing system for some time, partly because the housing m is taking so long to free up, and partly because r retired people do not have enough income to continu style of life to which they were accustomed while in w I look forward to a time when the basic household allowance replaces all the present forms of rate, rent household assistance, including mortgage tax relief local authority housing subsidies. There is an overwh ing need for rationalisation and considerable room

economies. The evidence in Kensington is that the availability of rent subsidies helps to increase rents, and why not? If a landlord can ask a tenant to pay more, and it costs the tenant nothing to pay more more because he can get it through supplementary benefit, a spiral of rising rents is created. We must handle the matter delicately, because we do not under any circumstances wish to force people into homelessness. But there is room for reform of the housing subsidy system, as I am sure my hon. Friends are aware.

In summary, I recommend that we should end the national insurance system and combine it finally with income tax. We should end the state earnings-related pension scheme and ensure that everyone has a money-purchase scheme instead, building up during their lifetimes. We should remove all restrictions on the freedom to take work. I personally recommend that we should end higher rate tax to give the greatest possible incentive to people to take risks, to create wealth and to bring back the sparkle into our economy.

I wish to make a final recommendation for a major administrative reform. I suggest that we should wind up the DHSS. It was a mistake to combine the money-handling side of the Department with the Ministry of Health. We need a separate Health Ministry, as we have a separate Department of Education. Running the two sides together places almost impossible burdens on one Secretary of State. Health and the redistribution of income are not so closely associated that they should be in one Department.

As to local DHSS offices, there are about 600 in the country staffed by exhausted people trying to handle the ghastly burden of the case work that we impose upon them. We should amalgamate them with the social and housing departments of local authorities, many of which are situated only a few hundred yards away. Either one or the other should be put fully in charge of the administration of personal case work. There is a strong case for giving all personal case work responsibility to local authorities, but some might argue that the responsibility should be taken away from local authorities and that we should have a national service under a reformed DHSS. I believe that it would be better to make it a local authority responsibility.

The remainder of the Department's work — the automatic payment of benefits and ensuring that people receive their basic income guarantees — should be combined with that part of the Inland Revenue dealing with income tax in a single computerised system.

A complete reconstruction of the relationships between the individual and the community, as expressed in terms of cash, is long overdue. We can see how to solve the problems of the welfare system. The question is: do we have the will?

12.8 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): It is always a great privilege and pleasure for any hon. Member to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), who is guaranteed to enliven any debate. He has brought some interesting and characteristically individualistic ideas to our approach to this complex problem, which we are discussing today thanks to the good fortune and good choice of my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

At this stage in the debate I wonder whether there is anything that anyone can add. I think that just about everything that needs to be said in a debate of this sort has been said. When my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington suggested that the Department of Health and Social Security should be abolished, he was not being frivolous. He made the suggestion for serious administrative reasons. We all know that there is a great deal of overlap, but there is a philosophical reason why we should be seeking ultimately to get rid of the Department. The Department exists because there are too many in Britain who have to make claims upon the state because they are too poor, because they do not have an income level to justify an existence without some form of assistance from elsewhere. None of us can take any pleasure from a system in which some in our society cannot manage on their own.

The ultimate goal in an ideal society must be for a Minister from one or other political party to say, "We have been able finally to get rid of poverty. The Department of Health and Social Security"—or at least the Department of Social Security—"is no longer necessary."

It might be thought initially that any suggestion to get rid of the Department of Social Security, as it were, is being made frivolously by those who have no concern for poverty. We often hear the charge from the Opposition that the Government are cutting back on social security, that the Department needs to be expanded and that we need to have more Ministers, more offices and more officers. Surely it must be our aim as parliamentarians and politicians—this will probably not happen in the 20th century—to abolish poverty so that it is not necessary for a Government to take from some groups to give to others. That must be our goal for the 21st century.

Let us consider the problems of 1985 that have been created through the misinterpretation of what Sir William Beveridge wanted to see in the early 1940s. The Beveridge report was a major contribution to social thinking at the time. It was crucial to the problems of the 1940s and the problems that it was addressed to in the light of Britain's experiences over the previous 20 years. However, if Sir William were alive today, I think that he would probably be chairing the inquiry that has been set up by my ministerial colleagues in the DHSS. If he were alive, I am sure that his approach today would be very different from the one which he adopted in the 1940s. Sir William would be the first to recognise that circumstances have changed dramatically. I am sure that he would be the first to identify the problem of the poverty trap.

I shall refer to some statistics that are in the document to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) referred. It is a research report entitled "Action on Welfare" by Mrs. Hermione Parker. Let us consider the position of someone in work who has an income of £63 a week, or even £94 a week. What is his net spending power after deductions have been made for necessary expenditure on rent, rates, water rates and other housing costs? This is necessary expenditure that has to be made by all those on low pay, the unemployed and those in receipt of supplementary benefit. The statistics that are set out in Mrs. Parker's report make the facts stand out loud and clear. They make it obvious that there is no incentive for those at the bottom of the working pile to work unless they can derive a certain income. For a married couple with two

[Mr. Michael Brown]

children, there needs to be an income of £130 a week before it is worth while for one member of the household taking any form of employment.

I do not blame anyone who is at the bottom of the pile and on supplementary benefit—let us suppose that he has a wife and two children—if he chooses not to work for less than £130. No one can blame such a person at the bottom of the pile for not actively seeking work when there is no financial incentive for him so to do. The fault lies with us and not with him. The buck stops with the House and with whatever Administration is presiding over such a situation. We must deal with unemployment and the poverty trap.

How do we deal with the problem? The inquiry which has been set up by my ministerial colleagues in the DHSS should consider the cut-off point when making national insurance contributions. It is crazy that someone like myself should stop paying the traditional regressive national insurance tax payment when his income exceeds £250 a week. At the same time, a low income earner has to pay the flat rate contribution, which as a percentage of his income is a very much greater contribution than mine. As my income increases, so I keep proportionately more of what I earn. That is the position when my income exceeds £250 a week. That is not the position of the person at the lower end of the income scale.

If we have the traditional progressive tax system for incomes, surely that system should apply to national insurance contributions. Surely that should stand out a mile to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and to all DHSS Ministers, and certainly to Treasury Ministers. To introduce progression to national insurance contributions would be a major way of redistributing income and should even meet with the approval of Labour Members. That is one way in which we could make a practical contribution to transferring resources from rich to poor. I cannot understand why there is a cut-off point and an extraordinary lack of progression at the bottom end of the income scale for those who pay national insurance contributions. Some attention should be devoted to that anomaly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington opened up the debate on child benefit. I desisted from intervening because I hoped that I might catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when my hon. Friend resumed his seat. He made the straightforward point of principle, which most political parties have accepted since the introduction of child benefit, that it is a flat payment for each child, regardless of the income level of the parent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington argued that the great advantage of the flat-payment system is that, whatever the parents' income level, there is a certain sum for every child in the land, and that it is exactly the same for rich or poor. I suggest to my hon. Friend that child benefit is worth more to the rich than to the poor. If someone who has an income that classes him as a middle income earner or a wealthy person, and is receiving for his or her child a fixed sum that is not subject to tax when ordinarily that income would be taxed, the benefit is worth more to him or her than to the poorer person who is not in the same tax bracket. There should be some serious thinking in the Department and the Treasury about the need to consider taxing child benefit. I would say that a case can be made if we are in the business of directing resources towards the poor, for taxing child ben that is a stepping stone to getting rid of child ben exists and replacing it with an alternative system

In an article which appeared last week in the m "Economic Affairs" Professor Michael Beenstoc City university business school argued that the benefit from fiscal resources and that if they ch have children they should not receive child ben said:

"Child Benefit was introduced in 1975 when Allowances (in cash) and Child Tax Allowances (agains incomes) were amalgamated into a single benefit. C Allowances had adverse redistributive effects on people incomes because families too poor to pay tax could nc from them. On the other hand Family Allowances wer so that the rich paid a large proportion of them back Child Benefit has righted the former wrong because it is even if a family is too poor to pay tax. On the other han the Family Allowance, because it is not subject to tax it more to the rich than to the poor.

It is often argued that another important reform in I that mothers could draw Child Benefit directly from th post office instead of being dependent upon receiving Allowance from their husbands. It is difficult to judge womens' financial independence has been increased Benefit since mean husbands can reduce their house-keeping money by all or some of the Child Be receives. Most probably this issue is not sufficiently i to be a major constraint on reform, although research transferability of family budgets within households is de

Mr. Ralph Howell: There is some disquiet am Opposition about my hon. Friend's proposal fo benefit. Does my hon. Friend agree that many problems would be solved if we converted child —which is really a married woman's pocket allowance under a different name—into a tax all above the tax threshold but retained it as a cash below the tax threshold? It would then serve the child benefit was originally designed to serve—i be a benefit to be spent on children. That benefit be targeted on those with low incomes who wo otherwise be able to spend their money on their to the same extent.

Mr. Brown: I could not agree more with n Friend. We know—some hon. Members may deny it—that people with our income levels and do not apply the child benefit allowance directly children. I shall say something that is p controversial and which will be denied and denou know it happens, because some of my constitu higher income levels have told me what they do wi benefit. I do not blame them, because the present encourages them to spend the money in this way. income earner who is able through his own prov make substantial and satisfactory provision for his will not spend the extra few pounds a week children; the money will be spent on the wife's from Harrods or wherever. Some people may seek that, but if we are in the business of concentratin resources on those at the bottom of the pile who have the tax advantages of those at the higher en income scale, there must be another way of ac better value for money from the £4 billion it c Exchequer to provide a universal system of child b

Let us go back to first principles, to the idea benefits, to when child tax allowance and allowance started. Let us go back to the Beveridg in 1942. Beveridge said that a demographic dimens to be considered. He argued:

"With its present rate of reproduction, the British race cannot continue; means of reversing the recent course of the birth rate must be found . . . children's allowances can help to restore the birth rate."

I am sure that Sir William, if he were alive today, would be the first to recognise that 1985 is not 1942. The demographic case for subsidised procreation has disappeared today.

According to Professor Beenstock, the rationale of child benefit is based on four value judgments. His first value judgment is:

"The state has no intrinsic concern in financing the upbringing of children. This is an entirely private matter. It is presumptuous and paternalistic to think otherwise."

Surely even the Opposition would agree with that.

The second value judgment is:

"If the economic position of the family is such that children are suffering, the state should intervene on society's behalf."

Fair enough; surely the Opposition would agree.

The professor's third value judgment states:

"There should be no arbitrary transfers of resources to families solely because they happen to have children."

The fourth value judgment states:

"The child benefit scheme should minimise distortions in the labour market. This reform would minimise the tax cost of providing benefits. Judgements 1 and 3 imply that the 'rich' should not receive Child Benefit. No. 2 implies that benefits should be focused on the children of 'poor' families. But there is a conflict between the first three judgements and the fourth. It may be necessary to extend benefits to families which are not 'poor' in order to minimise distortions in the supply of labour. In the end then, a trade-off has to be made."

Basically, the rationale for subsidising the procreation of children has ended in the 1980s. Are the poor getting value for the money that is charged on their behalf? *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) wishes to know the article from which I have quoted, I remind her that it is from the magazine *Economic Affairs*, published by the Institute of Economic Affairs. It was written by Professor Michael Beenstock of the City University Business School, who is a great authority on these matters.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Professor Beenstock has five children.

Mr. Brown: He certainly has no vested interest in what he is proposing, because he benefits considerably from the present system. He is a typical beneficiary of the system. Thousands of high income earners with a number of children are also beneficiaries. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton quoted the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who, even though he does not wish to receive the maternity benefit, cannot stop that benefit being thrust upon him. We wish my hon. Friend and his wife every success in their family venture, but if the birth of his offspring is successful his wife will have child benefit thrust upon her. We all know that my hon. Friend will be able to make adequate and excellent provision for his offspring. He does not require child benefit. I should not blame him——

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I am most interested to learn that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends are anxious to give away those benefits which they claim they do not require. Did they vote against reductions in taxation for higher income earners on the same grounds, or did they just go through the Government Lobby and accept the vastly increased incomes which resulted from that reduction?

Mr. Brown: Of course, everyone will vote whatever they can get out of the present system; that logical.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Answer the questi

Mr. Brown: I have answered it, frankly straightforwardly. Human nature is straightforward. trouble with the Opposition is that they try to dev systems that are contrary to the normal rationale of hum nature. I seek to recognise that, human nature being w it is, of course anyone——

Mr. Skinner: Yours.

Mr. Brown: Do the hon. Gentleman and Opposit Members agree that their parliamentary salary is adequate and generous one on which to live? In th circumstances, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that v numbers of Opposition Members do not accept ch benefit? Of course they do, and I do not blame them.

Mr. Skinner: I am one of those who believes tha Member of Parliament is paid exceedingly well, not t I have had any of it this year, because of the miners' stri It has gone to a more deserving cause. If that is the ca why are 350 Tories in the House earning an income o and above that £16,000 a year?

Mr. Brown: I cannot speak for my hon. Friends a the hon. Gentleman cannot speak for his hon. Friends w have not taken the principled stand that he has with rega to his income. We shall get into a terrible difficulty if start comparing our hon. Friends' behaviour with our ow I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken a princip stand for a cause in which he believes, but if he appli that logic to his hon. Friends he will not get far.

Child benefit costs the Exchequer £4 billion a year. is estimated that abolishing the child benefit system a replacing it by a system that ensures that social securi benefit goes directly to those in need could save t Exchequer £2·5 billion a year. That will leave £1·5 billi to be directed towards those at the bottom end of t income scale. When the Chancellor comes to us on March, he would then have £2·5 billion to apply increasing tax thresholds to take people out of the pover trap at the bottom of the scale. He might even have mon available to reduce the rate of direct taxation.

The discrepancy that I have mentioned reflects the fa that child benefit is paid to recipients on supplementa benefit, who under Professor Beenstock's assumptio would continue to receive child benefit. As t supplementary benefit child allowance is larger than child benefit counterpart, Professor Beenstock retains t present idea that benefit for families on supplementa benefit will go to those families with children.

The present child benefit system needs to be examine The poor are not receiving the best value for money fro the £4 billion which is being spent on their behalf b which does not go near them. No one in the House c deny that simple fact.

A number of points have been picked up by m colleagues. Let us consider the present welfare system. A my hon. Friends the Members for Tatton and f Gainsborough and Horncastle said, it is incomprehensibl unco-ordinated and expensive to administer. I w flabbergasted to hear the sum of £2 billion a ye mentioned as the cost of administration. My hon. Frie the Member for Tatton said that that equalled 2p off t

[Mr. Brown]

standard rate of tax or 2 per cent. off the present level of VAT. That is an incredibly expensive way to administer a system that does not benefit the poor. It is a system which pauperises the poor. We have had a universal welfare benefit system which has been extended and expanded over the past 30 or 40 years. At the end, we have more poor people. We have more people getting poorer. The system contributes to that debilitation and demoralisation.

The system is a cause of unemployment because of the poverty trap that it creates. It is a deteriorating system which, even if the Opposition were in control, would not be reversed in any way. It has been said that it penalises marriage and subsidises family break-up. Evidence can be adduced that that is so. It destabilises and divides society and undermines the rule of law. On all those tests, it does not work.

The system is incomprehensible. Many hon. Members do not understand how it works. We have to write letters at great length to Ministers on behalf of constituents who themselves do not understand how the system works. The argument is often put that if one simply has a system that gives welfare benefits to the poor and discriminates, one has to have a means test. I say that the present welfare system is a Heinz 57 variety of means tests. Every time I write to my hon. Friend the Minister with a constituency complaint, if the local social security office has not been able to deal with the matter, I am up against the argument that the present system has not just one but 1,001 means tests. It is incomprehensible.

The system is unco-ordinated, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said at the end of his remarks. It should be co-ordinated with the local authorities, particularly now that housing benefit is payable via the local authorities. It should be co-ordinated with the social services offices of the county councils and with the Department of the Environment, the Department of Education and Science and, most obviously, the Treasury. Therefore, the charge that the system is unco-ordinated stands up.

The system is unnecessarily expensive to administer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton said. It is a system of pauperisation. It must be. More than 2 million additional people are in receipt of welfare benefits today, compared with seven or eight years ago. The system has caused the poverty trap that was outlined earlier in the debate. It has caused unemployment because there is no incentive for some people who might be able to obtain work to go out and do so. It is a deteriorating system that will break down eventually. It is discriminatory, arbitrary and unfair.

We should seriously consider the fact that the system penalises morality. Tax and benefit laws encourage couples to cohabit rather than marry, to split up rather than stay together. One result is the vastly increased expenditure on single parents, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton said. It was £15 million in 1960 and £1,000 million in 1983. Tax laws contribute to the increased number of women in the labour force. I am not suggesting for one moment that women should not work at a time of high unemployment or that they should not seek work. Under the present welfare system of pauperisation, some women have to work who do not want to work. In those circumstances, surely we need to do something about our tax and welfare benefit system. At the bottom of the income scale, the woman is often the breadwinner when she does not want to be. There must be something wrong with a system that underwrites and encourages family destablisation.

The system also needs to be reviewed when it encourages students to take full advantage of the welfare system. I do not blame any student for claiming whatever he or she is entitled to. I remember those distant days, 15 or 16 years ago, when I was a student and there was no hint or intimation that I would be entitled to any welfare benefits during the long summer vacations. It can be argued that, in those days, students could get temporary work, whereas they cannot now. I remember having difficulty getting work here and simply packing my rucksack and going abroad to earn money. The welfare system should not be institutionalised to the extent that students, who have all sorts of benefits and privileges, should be given more.

The majority of students come from the well-off classes. If there were an education spokesman on the Opposition Front Bench, he would be the first to say that the problem with our higher education system is that not enough people from the poorer classes go to university. By definition, most students come from families with higher incomes. Why should the welfare state supplement benefits that they already enjoy? The system should benefit the poor and encourage them to go to universities.

The welfare state has failed the poor, has failed to do anything about poverty and is costly to the not-so-poor.

12.41 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the redeeming features of this debate, which has been initiated by a Right-wing Tory and backed by three more, is that whereas I thought that there might have been a Chamber full of Right-wing Tories, it looks as though they have found something more appropriate to do and have not turned up. If the Chancellor is to take any notice of what Tories have said today, he will have to take into account that only about four of them are espousing extreme Right-wing views. In 1979 and 1983, the place seemed full of Tories with ideas about cutting here, there and everywhere.

The debate acknowledges the failure of the Tory Government. In 1979, they had plans to save everyone and everything. The idea was that this would be a land flowing free of taxation and that little entrepreneurs and big entrepeneurs would come out of the ashes and create jobs all over the place. People would be hurrying and scurrying on bikes and other contraptions to find the jobs that would sprout up all over Britain. After six years, along comes a Tory Member of Parliament and, in as many words, says, "What has happened? We must now attack the very people we kidded on in 1979 and 1983." The Tories told them that they would cut taxes and generate jobs, but the truth is that the Government, aided and abetted by the few Tories who are here, are launching a campaign to put the burdens that the Tories have created further on to the backs of the working people.

I have listened carefully to what Tory Members have said. Their argument has been used for centuries by people who want to keep as much wealth as they can. They say, "We are only doing it for your good. We wealthy people are trying to give you a little bit more money. To do it in a proper and rational way, we are prepared to make a tiny sacrifice but we shall have to take it off you as well." Therefore, all the working class people must lose child

benefit because a few Tory Members say that they do not want it, despite the fact that they have long been pocketing it, along with the rest of the money that they can get.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is mistaking the point of the speeches from the Conservative Benches. Every one of us has said that the welfare state is missing its target. It is inadequately providing for those who are really in need because the benefits are spread too widely over those who are not. We propose the reverse of what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting, which is to take away from those in the middle and upper regions of income scale to give more to those at the lower end. I cannot understand how a Socialist can object to that.

Mr. Skinner: If I thought that what the hon. Gentleman was saying was true——

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman does not believe me.

Mr. Skinner: Of course I do not believe the hon. Gentleman, and unlike my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) I shall not be backing down. I do not believe Tory Members. I know what their game is. These are the very people who walked through the Lobby to cut the amount paid in tax on investment from 98 per cent. to 60 per cent. I have no doubt that many Tory Members benefited from that move. I know that they did not declare their interest when they spoke and voted in that debate.

Who do they think that they are kidding? All that Tory Members are about is lining their own pockets, as they have always done. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) comes here as a Tory Member and picks up his £16,000 a year. Not content with that, he does a bit of moonlighting on the side, not at £10 or £20 a week but at rates of pay of about £10,000 for every directorship. The right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) who left the Tory Cabinet 18 months ago and who used to be Secretary of State for Trade and chairman of the Tory party, had not been out of office for 12 months before picking up four directorships. That was not out of character with the rest of the Tories, and I am not making a special point about him, but he picked up so many directorships that some of the Tory Members who want to get rid of child benefit and attack women in our society, as they have been this morning, were complaining because the right hon. Gentleman had got too many directorships. I heard one in the Tea Room saying, "It's not fair that Cecil should get all those directorships and pinch them from us." What we have heard this morning is a lot of claptrap. They want to put the burden of the massive cost of the dole queue more and more on to those who are least able to carry it.

The Government have failed, and the DHSS offices are burdened with work because there are 4 million to 5 million people on the dole. Is it any wonder that the welfare state is under pressure, as Tory Members have been saying that it is? When the Government came into office there were about 1·25 million out of work—too many. That figure has been more than trebled, despite all the fiddled statistics issued by Tory Ministers. Is it any wonder that civil servants in these offices, with so many claimants for supplementary benefit, do not know which way to turn? Is it any wonder that the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security says that the increase for supplementary benefit and social services generally has been 28 per cent. in real terms under the Tory Government? Of course it has, because there are more than 2 million recipients of various benefits, because of the massive dole queue. The Government have created that increase. It is no wonder that the welfare state is beginning to creak.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman has changed fundamentally the character of what has hitherto been an interesting debate. He constantly runs away from the fact that, in 1983 figures, our social security benefits across the board have increased by £7·25 billion, of which £2·75 billion has been used in making substantial increases in the major rates of social security payments.

Mr. Skinner: This is a Minister who has gone into the Lobby to vote for four separate social security Bills, and every one of them has been used to take away benefits from low-paid people. He is the Minister who walked through the Lobby to rid several thousand recipients of earnings-related supplement of up to £14 a week — people who had been crippled, women who had been at work and were getting maternity benefit, and so on. He also took it away from women who had lost their husbands. That earnings-related supplement was taken away by the Minister and his hon. Friends, yet he has the cheek to say that the Government are in business to help the low-paid and those who are on various social benefits. Who does he think he is kidding? *[Interruption.]* I shall read *Hansard*. I know what the debate is about. It is to try to launch an argument for getting rid of child benefit and various other benefits. That is what Tory Members have been up to this morning.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Has the hon. Gentleman not been listening, or can he not understand that the scheme we are outlining would concentrate benefits on those of modest means and those who need them, and withdraw the benefit from the better off?

Mr. Skinner: I understand the kidology, but what I am trying to explain to the hon. Gentleman and others is that I have seen through it. The Tories throughout the centuries have always talked the same language—"We are trying to help you". In 1979, on the steps of 10 Downing street, the Prime Minister spoke about compassion and hope. Does anybody now believe that that was her real intention?

The real intention of the Government was to throw a lot of people out of work, and then introduce an incomes policy based on the insecurity of those who had jobs. The Government's intention was to frighten the people who had jobs into thinking that they had better not put in pay claims of whatever percentage because there were people waiting round the corner to take their jobs.

Tory Members talk about the low paid, and this morning they have poured out their crocodile tears. They are the same people who are now signing a motion to abolish the wages councils. The wages councils exist to protect those at the bottom of the wages league. The same people who are pouring out crocodile tears want to send workers unprotected into the labour market. Those same Tory Members want to take away union protecton if they get half a chance to do so, and they have succeeded to some degree. As a result of their policies they are putting people further and further into the poverty trap.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Once again the hon. Gentleman entirely misunderstands the argument.

Mr. Skinner: No, I have listened to it.

Mr. Hamilton: Because of the existence of wages councils, a floor has been placed on wages which keeps people unemployed. We seek to enable people to price themselves back into work and to top up their incomes through the welfare and social security system. In that way we can reduce unemployment and yet provide people on low incomes with decent standards of living. Therefore, what is suggested is the reverse of what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Skinner: I heard all that in 1979. At that time the whole tenor of the Tory Government's policy was along those lines. They said that if only there were lower wages, all the little busybody entrepreneurs would be able to pick up people and provide them with work. But instead of that we now have between 4 million and 5 million people on the dole. The hon. Gentleman is on to a new tack but it is the same old principle—trying to kid the people on.

Let me put a question to the hon. Gentleman. If he is concerned about the low paid and about the massive amount of money being spent to keep a dole queue costing, according to official figures, between £18,000 million and £20,000 million, taking into account lost tax and insurance contributions, will he guarantee that on Monday, when the Government put before the House a proposition to introduce further cuts extending over the next four years and resulting in the creation of further unemployment, he will vote against that White Paper which will put even more people into the poverty trap and send them to the DHSS where the already overburdened civil servants will have to deal with more claimants? What will the hon. Gentleman do?

Mr. Hamilton: For at least the fourth time, the hon. Gentleman is entirely mistaken if he thinks that the Government have cut expenditure since taking office in 1979. Public expenditure has increased by 1·5 per cent. a year. The argument that unemployment results from a failure in demand is quite wrong. Unemployment results from microeconomic causes such as wages councils. We must seek to reduce unemployment and improve benefit levels for those who cannot find jobs or otherwise cannot support themselves without state assistance.

Mr. Skinner: Then I take it that the hon. Gentleman will vote for cuts in housing benefit, for example, resulting in more people becoming homeless, and that he will not support the idea of getting people back to work building houses and thereby providing more money for the economy, paying taxes, national insurance and the rest of it. If the hon. Gentleman really wants to help people at the lower end of the scale, he will not do that. The same applies to the rate capping proposals, of course.

The hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has left the Chamber, but I wanted to refer to his fantastic policy called BIG. He was asked one question: how much will it be? One thing is certain. The hon. Gentleman dodged the question. It will not be big. The idea that it is possible to fashion a super family income supplement on to the social service system and thereby solve everyone's problems is nonsense.

The debate has shown that the Government have gone very badly off course. It has shown that there are a lot of Tories who are no longer prepared to defend the Government's record and that there is just a little hard core of Right wingers saying, "There is a way out from all the mess that we have created and this massive dole queue. It is to cut back even further and kid people that we are helping them at the same time."

The Government are now in the process of wanting to throw more people out of work. They have just got rid of another several thousand shipbuilders. When the miners are fighting to retain jobs in their communities, the Government say that they want to throw more of them on the dole. It has cost £6,000 million to finance the strike —and it will have to be found by the taxpayer—with the intention of throwing more people in mining communities out of work and sending them to the social security offices.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: The hon. Gentleman said that the purpose of the Government's response to the miners' strike was to throw people out of jobs. Is not he aware of the remark of both the Secretary of State for Energy and the National Coal Board, repeated again and again, that if any pit closes any man wishing to continue to work in the industry has the guarantee of a job? Is not that the most generous job offer of any industry, here or in Europe?

Mr. Skinner: That is another of the lies that have been trotted out in this propaganda exercise. The Tory Government have been assisted in it by the media. Sadly, the BBC, which is supposed to be impartial and which has 20 or 30 uneconomic units of production—not one of them makes a penny of profit—has been pouring out the same propaganda about there being a job for everyone. If the three pits in Kent are closed, which pit are the Kent miners to go to? It is a load of nonsense. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is a load of nonsense but the Government control the media and are able to get these lies across thick and fast.

This Government created 21,000 bankruptcies and company liquidations in the year ended 31 December 1984. That is a record over and above the previous four years and is another reason why more people are going to social security offices in order to have the means to live. The black economy is supposed to be running at over £8,000 million a year. That figure of £8,000 million could be taxed but is not being taxed because of this Government's approach. When they came to power this Government said that they would cut income tax for everybody, but the first thing they said to low paid people was, "Yes, we know that you have an income rate band of several hundred pounds at 25 per cent., but we are going to put a stop to that." Those Tory Members of Parliament who were elected in 1979 filled the Lobby and said to low paid people, "We shan't let you keep your 25 per cent. tax band; we are going to put it up to 30 per cent." That was the very first act of this Government. They very nearly doubled value added tax, thus imposing a very regressive system of taxation on the low paid.

This Government have presided over an increase in income tax and national insurance, which is roughly the same thing, from 31·5 per cent. in 1979 to 39 per cent. This Government, who are supposedly looking after the interests of the low paid, have introduced a gas tax and an electricity tax, and a few weeks ago they introduced a water tax which no doubt will be copied up and down the land. Although the Government have talked about cutting taxation, they have done the very opposite. Since 1978-79, the tax burden on a family of four on two thirds average

income is calculated to have risen by 9 per cent. while a similar family of four with an income of 10 times the national average has had a tax reduction of 23 per cent.

Tory Member of Parliament after Tory Member of Parliament has stood up this morning and tried to kid people that they are in business to try to provide more benefits for those at the lower end of the wages scale by taking benefits away from those at the top end of the scale. I judge people by what they do, not by what they say. During the last six years, the Tories have allowed well paid people, those with an income of over £19,000 a year, to pay less tax while those with a family of four on low incomes have had their tax burden increased by 9 per cent. Before the general election in 1979 the Conservatives said that they were going to change the tax system in Britain so much that Mick Jagger, Tony Jacklin and all the rest of the tax exiles would come back to this country to live. The Government did not satisfy even them. In fact, I believe that Tony Jacklin went to live in Spain or Gibraltar. He was only in the Channel Islands when this Government came to power, but he moved further away.

The Government have increased the dole queue massively. There is an aging population, with 9·5 million pensioners, and by the next general election there will probably be 10 million pensioners. Because they are living longer many of them are disabled. The National Health Service has been run down by the Government. There is a waiting ist of 750,000 people. Last year 1,000 people died of kidney failure because there were not enough kidney machines to save them. Some of the potential workers who are stuck in the dole queue cannot build kidney machines because the Government will not finance the National Health Service properly and allow them to be built. Young lads and lasses coming out of school with O and A levels and then going to university afterwards go straight into Mrs. Thatcher's Yosser land because they are unable to find jobs.

Thousands of young people are leaving school without the prospect of work and yet there are many jobs to be done. Every one of those young people could be paying tax and national insurance if they were provided with work. Instead, they are pushed on to cheap labour schemes to work for multiple stores which claim to operate the Thatcher philosophy, and pick up £25 a week for each employee.

That is what the Government have done. It is at the root of the argument about social security and taxation. The Government have put a burden round their own neck. It is the job of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself to see to it that they do not get a chance to hand it round their neck much longer. The people are beginning to sus the Government. They are beginning to find the Government out. It is conceivable that at the last election people thought, "We'll give her a bit of a chance. It looks as if inflation has come down temporarily, even though the index has been fiddled. Taking all things into account perhaps unemployment will diminish." Now the people know that the Government are not in the business of getting rid of that pool of unemployed. They are using that pool to depress wages even further. That is why Government Members want to get rid of wages councils and trade union restrictions—that is how they describe them—whenever possible.

That is also why the Government have introduced a review of social security. They do not kid me when they say that they want the review of pensions and social security entitlements because they want to examine them. The Secretary of State for Social Services has set the review in train, with the Prime Minister's backing, so that he can slash pensions and other benefits. The Government have tied themselves in a knot which they cannot unravel because of the massive amounts of money that have to be paid as a result of throwing people out of work when they should be doing useful jobs. Millions of jobs could be created if only the Government had the will to ensure that people are given a chance.

Government Members are using this debate to attack people at the bottiom of the ladder receiving social security benefit. They are using it to attack child benefit and all women who receive it. Some disgraceful statements have been made by Tory Members against women drawing child benefit. Those hon. Members should be ashamed of themselves. The debate is being used to launch a counter-attack against those on the Tory Benches who have been making noises about cuts in housing benefit.

It is nauseating. Government Members talk about cuts in housing and other benefits. They are the same Government Members who the other week were rushing and racing to see the Leader of the House so that they could receive £6,500 to set up a second home in London. How many Tory Members are involved in that? Stand up!

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The recent announcement by the Leader of the House will not alter public spending one iota. All that it does is to correct an anomaly. Instead of paying hotel bills or rent for a flat an hon. Member can now offset mortgage interest—not the capital—against the additional costs allowance. That does not alter the amount of money that can be claimed.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman rose to the bait. It is scandalous that in the month when the Government announce that Members of Parliament can pick up a further £6,500 to buy a second home — that is the principle behind the matter—Tory Members spend this morning attacking poor people. They do that on behalf of a Prime Minister who talks about people being subsidised, while she has three subsidised homes—Chequers, No. 10 Downing street and the flat in Kent which is subsidised by the National Trust. It is scandalous to hear words emitted from the mouths of Tory Members attacking those at the lower end of the income scale, when they are pocketing money left, right and centre, get on every gravy train to Brussels, Luxembourg or anywhere else, and go on fact-finding tours at everyone else's expense to have a decent fortnight away.

During a year of rate capping, that same Government have allowed the Prime Minister to increase the amount of money for the Private Office at No. 10. According to a parliamentary answer that I received recently, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) left No. 10, the Office cost £1,229,000, yet during the past financial year to 31 March 1984 the sum spent was £2,850,000. This year it looks as though the figure will go above £3 million.

Mr. Leigh: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the cost of the Prime Minister's Office relevant to the motion that I tabled this morning?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

carefully. We are talking about taxation and benefits and the debate is ranging wide. I think that the hon. Gentleman should return to the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Skinner: Every penny of the threefold increase in the sum spent on No. 10 Downing street, which is in complete contradiction to the philosophy that the Prime Minister espouses for local authorities and everyone else, comes from taxation. The one matter about which the Prime Minister is right is that the Government have no money and that it belongs to the taxpayers. Every penny that the Government use to look after their own comes from the taxpayers' pockets. The £3 million or more that will be spent this financial year to finance No. 10 also comes from the taxpayers' pockets. So does the £75 million, with which the Government, through the Bank of England — the taxpayers' bank — bailed out Johnson Matthey a few months ago, although it went under, had no reserves and was an uneconomic unit of production.

When we debate taxation and social security, I do not look through the narrow eyes of Tory Members. They try to see how they can cut and carve to hammer the working class and poor people. There is plenty of money, but it is being spent on the wrong causes. About £20,000 million is being spent on the dole queue. With the proper political will, that could be changed. We could get those people back to work and paying taxes to help all the mothers and fathers who are pensioners and the disabled to have a better standard of living. That would help to provide a better National Health Service, all the proper benefits, and pensioners, instead of being on the poverty line and putting up with miserly sums, could have half average wages when they retire. If we had full employment we could do all that. We are having the debate this morning because the Government have got themselves in a mess with all the money that is expended in those directions.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) mentioned the death grant and, obviously, I should like to see it increased to more than £200. One Friday morning a few years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) introduced a Bill that would have increased the death grant to more than £200, but Tory Members were brought in between 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm to talk it out. They did not have the guts to vote against it, but they brought in one or two Tory Members to stop the death grant being increased. The hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) was one of them. He was paid off for talking out my hon. Friend's Bill by being made a Whip a few months later.

Mr. Michael Brown: Why did the Labour Government not increase it?

Mr. Skinner: The Labour Government did not increase it, and I blame them as well. The hon. Gentleman should know as well as anyone here that I did not vote against the Labour Government 150 times because I enjoyed it. I did so because I could not stomach much of what they were doing. I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) that the next Labour Government will have many other jobs to do. If they do not carry out the policies included in the manifesto that will be put before the people, I shall do the same again. I am not searching for records; I shall do it because it is the right thing to do.

There has been much talk in the debate about helping the low paid and pensioners, and there is plenty of money around to help them. Not very long ago the House debated the possibility of sending several hundred million pounds to bail out the Common Market, which has been the largest white elephant of the past few decades. We have had 10 years of misery and of the Community being a debilitating drain upon our resources. If the Government can find money for the Common Market, I say that they can find it for child benefit, for pensioners and for other deserving people in society. If they can find another £10,000 million — or is it £12,000 million — to finance the latest American weapon, Trident, I say that they should use the money to create a better life for all our people.

The debate has been wide-ranging, and when one talks about taxation it could hardly be anything else. I am pleased to have this opportunity to ensure that at least one voice puts across a different argument. The low paid have suffered under this Government, and the Low Pay Unit has produced statistics to prove it. We do not need lessons from Tory Members, who are trying to kid us on that they want to help the low paid. Tory Members are more concerned with lining their pockets and those of their friends than they are with looking after the deserving people of our country.

1.18 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): It is one of the engaging characteristics of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that he can be guaranteed, on such an occasion, to tap that rich seam of rhetorical nonsense and fiction which is his permanent baggage and which is wheeled out on every possible occasion. I had wondered why so few Labour Members were present for this important debate, although I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) here, until I realised that the hon. Member for Bolsover was planning to speak. Now I know why the Opposition Benches are empty.

The hon. Member for Bolsover made several interesting points, and I could spend at least half an hour dealing with them. He said that he judges people on what they do, not on what they say. That is interesting, given that in his pit of Bolsover more than 90 per cent. of the men are at work. That must be a clear sign of their views on the terms offered by the National Coal Board, and the hon. Gentleman is clearly out of step with the feelings of local people.

Mr. Skinner: The Bolsover pit is part of the Nottinghamshire NUM, and from the beginning of the dispute the Notts NUM called upon its members to go to work. In my view it was wrong. I say that even today. I do not believe in dodging the column. As a Member of Parliament it would have been easy for me, seeing more of my constituents going to work during the dispute than on strike, to say to myself, "I had better change my mind. I had better put my head below the parapet." I made my decision a long time ago; it has not changed and it never will. Even if all the miners went back, I would not change my point of view. The great majority of British miners have been fighting for a decent principle, which is to save jobs. It has not been a dispute that sprang from greed and materialism. It has been concerned with saving jobs and not about wages. The saving of jobs will lead to the provision of taxation. The proceeds of that taxation can be

used to provide social security payments and many other benefits. I shall never change my mind about the NUM's dispute.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful for that intervention, although I thought that the hon. Gentleman might develop it into a further speech. I shall not pursue the hon. Gentleman's stand on the miners' dispute, save to say that the whole country is aware that it is a political strike, aimed at bringing down the Government, and nothing else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke about child benefit. My wife is now the beneficiary of child benefit for three children and I would be less than honest if I were not to advert to this matter. My wife is a reader of *Hansard* and I cannot escape the truth in the end. I understand that there is widespread concern about the possibility of child benefit being withdrawn. I believe that the answer lies in the observation made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who suggested a simple way of overcoming the problems concerned with child benefit. He said that those who are below the tax threshold should continue to receive benefit in the way in which it is currently paid. He argued that there is every reason why those who are above the tax threshold should have the child allowance reinstated as it was prior to 1977. If that system had continued, child allowance would be worth £520 a year today. As a tax-free benefit, it is worth about £1,127 per annum. Therefore, the greatest benefit has been to the taxpayer rather than the non-taxpayer. My right hon. and hon. Friends are, of course, interested in those who are not paying tax, especially in the context of this debate.

The previous Socialist Government followed the practice of increasing the number of benefits paid universally through the Post Office. This was met with a great deal of abhorrence among the general public. It seemed that it was necessary to queue in a post office to receive a benefit that was being handed out, indirectly, by the hon. Member for Thurrock and her right hon. and hon Friends as though it was their largesse.

The Labour party is in the business of buying votes. Despite all the remarks of the hon. Member for Bolsover about Conservative Members, his party is more in the business of buying votes than the Conservative party. Conservatives do not believe in that game. It was the practice of the Labour party to increase the number of universal benefits paid out through the Post Office and I am glad that this Government have not gone down that road. I hope that we can remove ourselves from that practice. It is merely a way of recycling people's cash from their pocket, through the system and back out at the Post Office, invariably with a long queue.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on his magnificent achievement in introducing the motion. I am sorry that I missed the first part of his speech. I look forward to reading it when the report in *Hansard* appears on Monday. I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that it has been a useful debate. It is one from which the House may well benefit. It is only right that we should have the time to debate these complex and important matters in the slightly less rarefied atmosphere of a Friday debate. I am disappointed that there are not more Members on both sides of the House to participate in what I think is a useful discussion.

The Government were elected to do two principal things above all others. First, they were elected to control public expenditure so that a greater volume of resources could be released to the wealth-creating private sector. Secondly, the Government were elected to reduce the burden of taxation to provide greater incentives to work harder and to accept increased responsibilities. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) nods.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although there has been a reduction in the standard rate of taxation, an increased number of items have suffered the imposition of the value added tax method of raising taxation? Any honest broker looking at what has happened during the past six years would see that taxation has been shifted from direct to the indirect. Invariably, that hurts the poor rather than the rich.

Mr. Howarth: I believe that the tenor of speeches by Conservative Members has shown our concern about the fact that we have not been able to move faster down the road towards reducing the tax burden. That is why this debate has been initiated. I accept that there has been a certain shift from direct to indirect taxation. I welcome that move, because it gives people the opportunity to decide where they want to spend their money—whether it be on a foreign holiday or on fish and chips. I supported the imposition of VAT on fish and chips because I believed that buying fish and chips was similar, in many respects, to going out to restaurants.

This debate is important because it tries to get to the heart of the issue — public expenditure and levels of taxation. The Government are facing a problem because it is proving much more difficult to control public expenditure than we had hoped. We have gone through many traumas, most recently with the reduction in student grant for a saving of £39 million. That proposal caused me and some of my hon. Friends considerable difficulties. The saving was but a drop in the ocean; it was peanuts. That example illustrates the difficulties that we face in matching our desire to reduce taxation and our desire to implement policies aimed at achieving our objectives.

Some advances have been made in direct taxation. Penal taxation at the top end—it is not designed to raise money; it is merely a political tax aimed at making the pips squeak—has been ended. The highest level of marginal taxation is now 60 per cent., and I warmly welcome that. It has had an unquantifiable effect on talent and enterprise. It has kept people in Britain who would otherwise have sought jobs in more healthy and sunnier climes. The effect is unquantifiable.

Another advance on the taxation front was the move in the last Budget to take 800,000 people out of taxation. I warmly welcome that move. I understand the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) who felt that everyone should pay something into the system, to feel part of it. I respect that point but, on balance, I believe that it is better to take those at the bottom of the scale out of taxation altogether.

Despite the advantages of the Government's policies, the overall effect has been to increase the burden of taxation. That is why my hon. Friends and I are trying to persuade the Treasury Bench that action is required. Our

[Mr. Howarth]

numbers may be small, but I assure my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that we are but the tip of a large iceberg and that the rest of the iceberg is dispersed across the United Kingdom doing its constituency business. My hon. Friends are certainly here with us in spirit. We need to take a radical look at the costs and benefits of taxation, not least because the present system is not only highly complex but extremely unfair.

A quick look at housing benefit shows that its cost has increased rapidly in recent years. It has increased by 140 per cent. in real terms over the past 10 years. So much for the Government grinding the faces of the poor. Housing benefit has increased 10 times in cash terms.

The hon. Member for Bolsover deals in fiction. I am sorry that he has left his seat, because I could have drawn the facts I have given to his attention. I do not say that he would have been wiser, but he would have been better informed.

Since the Government took office, expenditure on housing benefit has risen from £1·4 billion in 1979-80 to an estimated £3·9 billion in the current financial year. That is an increase of 182 per cent. in six years. The rub is that that benefit goes to nearly one in three of this country's 19·5 million householders. Both sides of the House agree that it is nonsense for people to pay tax and then receive a handout. The more across-the-Floor agreement we can reach on this issue, the better the chance of tackling the root problems and alleviating poverty. That is what we all wish.

I hope that it will not be imputed by the Opposition Front Bench—as it has been by the hon. Member for Bolsover—that Conservative Members do not have a genuine, heartfelt and deep-seated interest in trying to eradicate poverty.

I have too great a respect for the hon. Member for Thurrock to believe that she does not understand the motives of Conservative Members. Housing benefit is an example of taking money with one hand and dishing it out with another via a £2 billion bureaucratic system.

The Conservatives are interested in getting people back to work, but today there is little financial incentive in working. There is a compelling moral incentive. The vast majority of people who are out of work want a job, but the system is against them. I should like to give an example. I am sure that all of us in our surgeries are faced week in week out with a series of examples that enable us to deduce that the system is not working.

I wanted some work done in the garden of my London house. I live in London and Staffordshire because I work in both places. Given the pressures of my parliamentary commitment, I did not have time to do it, so I looked around for someone to come and do the job. A chap came along. He did an excellent job. I asked him what his business was, and he told me that he was unemployed. I asked him whether there were any jobs going. He said, "Yes, there are plenty going, but at £70 a week it is not worth my signing on for one of them." He was better off under the system, being paid in cash through the black economy for doing odd jobs, than if he were properly employed in a job in the white economy—if one can call it that.

It is not for me to sit in judgment on that individual. That is not my job. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes said, it is not his fault. It is not the fault of such people. It is our fault in Parliament. We m the rules. People simply operate them as we make th Many of them are much brighter than we are at wor out how the rules can be avoided.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton said, system is against people in that position. It is our jo try to make things better. Equally, some of those pe who are in work look enviously at those who are n work and who do not want to find a job because they better off on the dole. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Mem for St. Helens, South can laugh, but that is a fact of

Only last weekend, one of the helpers at my surg who earns about £38 a week—admittedly in a part- job, but that is her only source of employment—w upset. A constituent who was divorced from his wife had been set up in a council house came to see me bec his application for DHSS single payments had not b met in full. He showed me the letter from the DHSS, his request. There was a veritable inventory of goods my constituent believed he was entitled to, to be paid out of the system. There were things such as a sidebo a clock and an ironing board as well as a host of cutl bedding and so on. In the end, he picked up £69·50 to three blankets, a pillow, three pillowcases and s sheets.

I am not saying that in itself the system of si payments is wrong. That man, who has responsibility his family, put himself at the mercy of the state everybody else while at the same time others who w working had not much more money than he was ta from unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit an on. My helper, who was in work, found it pretty ga that not only did she have to work, which she was ple to do, but she paid her rent, rates and so on out of income. Therefore, it is necessary for us to try to estab a clear advantage in being employed——

Dr. McDonald: How?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friends and I have expla how that can be done. It can be done by raising thresholds and making it worth while for people to w If the hon. Lady wants me to quote them again, I can examples. To be £20 a week better off than unemplo people, a single wage earner in a married household to earn £136 a week. That speaks for itself. There something wrong with the system and it must be chan Therefore, I warmly welcome the initiative taken by hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Hornc in moving the motion. I hope that action will be take that front.

I should like to return to one other matter of fi policy. Across the party divide in Parliament, we h encouraged home ownership through mortgage interes relief, which effectively is taxation forgone at the ra £3,500 million a year. Equally, we have encoura provision for private pensions, which is the equivalen between £900 million and £3,400 million in for taxation. I am not against either, because both poli have been successful. They have relieved the burden might otherwise have fallen on the state and h encouraged people to make private provision, with all that implies for a greater interest in looking after their homes, for example. Therefore, that has been benefi

However, I should like to ask the Ministers to ha look at other areas where similar incentives could proc

the successful results that we have seen in housing and pensions. Private health insurance is the first example. In 1948 there were about 70,000 subscribers to BUPA. In 1981 the number of people covered by private health insurance schemes was 4,116,000, which is a substantial increase. Despite that, the underlying rate of growth has fallen.

The boom year of 1980 was followed in 1981 by significantly slower growth, when the number of subscribers and those covered grew by 14 per cent. Expansion of such health provision would alleviate the burden on the NHS. We know from experience that, when people provide for themselves, they take a closer interest in the service being provided. I must emphasise, however, that there is no question of not providing a safety net. That is the basis of our social security system. The argument is about how that net might be achieved. Everyone should have access to good health care, but there should be a larger injection of funds into health care. Giving people an incentive to make private provision would achieve that end.

Some incentive could be given to those who want to contract out of the state education system. About 7·5 million children are in maintained schools and about 500,000 are in non-maintained ones. More could be encouraged into private provision, thus relieving some of the burden on the state sector, making the systems more competitive and providing greater choice for parents. All of that would be highly beneficial.

The current welfare system is too complicated, does not concentrate resources on those who need it, encourages the black economy and operates as a disincentive to work. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give his colleagues in the DHSS the message that we want some radical reviews and I hope that we have encouraged him to be radical and bold. Unless the burden of taxation is reduced, we shall have an ever-increasing spiral of heavier taxation and greater handouts from the DHSS. We do not want that. We can get people back into work by increasing tax thresholds. I hope that my hon. Friend has noted the arguments that have been deployed—this is but the tip of the iceberg.

1.43 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I apologise to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) for not having been able to be here for his speech. Many thoughts have crossed my mind in the past hour during which I have been here as there seems to be some illogicality in what I have heard from Conservative Members.

I do not wish to enter a discordant note when hon. Members talk about putting more people back to work and removing poverty, as that is a common aim. The only trouble is that, in the past six years, there has been little effort to achieve anything in that regard. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) said that 800,000 people have been taken out of the structure in the past few years. Two or three million have been taken out of the tax structure — they have simply been made unemployed, and the Government made little effort to put them back to work.

In my constituency there has been a classic example of the stupidity of the change of taxation from direct to indirect in the last Budget. The tax threshold was raised, and I welcome that, but at the same time VAT was imposed on building repairs, double glazing, insulation and so on for the first time. In the months following the imposition, there was a 30 per cent. fall in the number of orders placed. That meant that the amount of glass and fibreglass that had to be made fell—these products are made by companies within my constituency, as the House is aware. Those companies found that their order books were decreasing and therefore the number of people who needed to be employed decreased.

In my constituency there are already pockets with unemployment rates of 20 and 30 per cent. and the loss of any job is a tragedy. We were losing jobs hand over fist as a result of the Chancellor's shift of taxation from direct to indirect. What is more, the process did not stop there. Unit costs increase when the amount of orders available decreases, which makes our goods less competitive against the French, the Belgians and the others and there is then a further loss of jobs following because we are no longer competitive.

There is another spin-off. The more that we fail to insulate houses and new build, the more heating allowances are needed because heating costs are higher and more money is paid out. The more people who are put on the dole, the more will be paid out in state benefits. The illogicality of it all is that we go back to encouraging unemployment.

I am all for encouraging employment, and perhaps we should take a leaf out of the books of other countries for ideas to stimulate our economy. In the past few months, the pound has sunk almost out of sight against the dollar. I shall not trespass into that subject too much because I appreciate that we are debating taxation and benefits. What efforts have been made to do anything about the fall of the pound? Do the Government and the Prime Minister wring their hands and say, "Woe is woe"? They do nothing about it. We are then told that that makes exports cheaper, but they forget that it also increases the cost of importing raw materials.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As 70 per cent. of the unit costs of production is labour, does not a lower pound increase the opportunities for employment rather than decrease them? Should not the hon. Gentleman be welcoming this as a good thing?

Mr. Bermingham: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's mathematics and mine come out with the same total. However, as most of our raw materials have to be brought in, they are more expensive. The pound has fallen relatively against the dollar and has not fallen relatively to any great extent against the European basket of currencies, a fact that even Treasury Ministers will accept. Our greatest competitors are now in Europe, but let us not worry too much about that.

The realities are that the way to remove poverty is to create a climate of employment. To do that, one has to stimulate industry. It has been found in the Americas that one can stimulate industry—everybody keeps telling us that we should look to the United States—simply by a policy of public investment. People then come off the dole and one stimulates the economy by a policy of encouraging industrial investment. We shall not encourage industrial investment at interest rates of 14 or 15 per cent., or effectively 15 or 16 per cent. The Government have got it all wrong.

If the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood wants us to remove poverty and reorganise our taxation system,

[Mr. Bermingham]

he should bring pressure to bear on his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury to reduce the burden of interest paid, stimulate the economy by public sector investment and investment within the private sector from public funds to create jobs. More people will then be working and the taxation burden can be effectively alleviated because if more people are paying tax, the Government will not need so much from every one of them. We should equalise the tax system to shift some of the burden of taxation away from the poor and back to the rich. Then we can care for those who need care, those at the bottom.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood and his hon. Friends can bring a little pressure to bear on their right hon. and hon. Friends over the 19 March Budget. Were VAT to be extended to things such as children's shoes and clothes, and the other suggested items for indirect taxation, the poor would pay.

Many of us in this House are fed up to the back teeth at seeing that everything the Government do seems to benefit one tiny section of society at the expense of the rest of it.

1.50 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Much of this morning's debate has been taken up by Conservative Members proposing alternative systems of taxation and social security, with the aim of making those systems much more efficient in delivering benefits to those who need them. Nobody will quarrel with those aims. We are all agreed that we want to see poverty reduced and employment increased but, that having been said, suspicions begin to spring to mind.

Alternative schemes have been described in some detail, but two important features have been left out of the description. The first is the amount of money to be spent on whatever new system of social security Conservative Members have in mind. Secondly, under the proposed unified system, at what level of earnings will a person cease to receive benefit? Unless those two questions are answered, no one can have any idea whether such schemes will do any more than is done under the present scheme to relieve and eliminate poverty.

In listening to some of the points made about the social security review and about child benefit, our suspicions become a reality, for none of the proposals of Conservative Members has had anything to do with relieving poverty; a straight cut in benefits is what they want to see.

Our suspicions concerning the social security review are strengthened every time we open our newspapers. We read of the rumour that the Government might want to do away with the earnings-related pension scheme and restrict pensioners once again to a flat-rate pension, undoing all the good work that was done, by consent from both sides of the House in 1975, when the new system of pensions was introduced. When we read that sort of thing in the newspapers, we wonder whether the review is just a fancy exercise to cut public spending on benefits once again. Judging from the Government's record since 1979, I have a shrewd notion of the answer to that question.

The attacks on child benefit—particularly from the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—have been little short of disgusting. I am sure that every mother in the country will listen most carefully to the claim of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends that child benefit is the married women's pocket money, o it is used by the wife to spend on dresses from Ha I do not know what kind of cloud-cuckoo-land the Gentleman and his hon. Friends live in, but understand why they are here on a Friday morning a in their constituencies listening to mothers who ca them how they spend child benefit.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman that most mothers child benefit, on the day on which they receive it, o family food bill for the week. If they do not do that, save up the child benefit to buy a pair of shoes for o the children, and that takes a considerable time. If the Gentleman thinks that child benefit is the ma woman's pocket money, or that that happens on considerable scale, I do not know who he think represents or what he is doing in the House of Comm Certainly I do not think that mothers in his constitu will make the mistake of voting for him again when hear that sort of nonsense from him. It is u disgraceful to suggest that child benefit is used on scale for any such purpose—*[Interruption.]* There point in the hon. Gentleman sitting muttering. He has the damage himself. He has said what he thinks benefit is used for, and I am sure that many people be extremely interested in his views. Child bene certainly not used for that purpose, and its introdu was one of the most important changes made in fa support.

Having mentioned family support, perhaps I sh remind the House that family support, through benefit, has two purposes. One is to relieve poverty. other is to redress the balance between families children and those without children and single taxpa The burden of taxation has fallen more heavily on fam with children than on those without and on the si taxpayer for a number of years. The purpose of benefit in the form of a cash payment was to alleviate

The second reason why the Opposition were sceptical about what Government supporters said explaining their desire to reduce poverty by changing system and the taxation of benefits was that, if that really been their aim, and since the word "taxat appears in the title of the motion, we would have expe a trenchant and thorough-going criticism of all the cha in taxation since 1979 which have let the rich off pa tax and increased the burden of taxation on the poor. have heard hardly a word about that other than from hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes who is honest than most and was prepared to say that he happy to go into the Division Lobby to reduce the bu of taxation on the better paid, amongst whom he inclu himself, as a matter of self-interest. The hon. Gentle was not even prepared to dress it up in the way that Prime Minister does and pretend that all this had to do increasing incentives, putting people back to work getting entrepreneurs to produce jobs. If that was intention, experience since 1979, as unemployment climbed continually, shows that that was a grave mis and that it is high time that taxation policies were chan There was not a word of criticism of what has happening to taxation since 1979 and the way in which burden of taxation on the poor has increased.

Let me give one or two examples. Since 1978-7 family of four on two thirds average earnings has see

direct tax burden rise by more than 9 per cent. A similar size family earning 10 times the average wage now pays 23 per cent. less than in 1978-79.

I give another example. Of the £4·5 billion real income tax cuts since 1978-79, almost half—44 per cent.—have been enjoyed by the richest 5 per cent. of taxpayers. Overall, the annual rate of spending on tax cuts, capital gains tax, capital transfer tax, the abolition of the higher rate band of income tax and the abolition of the investment income surcharge amounts to £3·5 billion. That sum of money would go a long way towards alleviating poverty and helping families. It would, for example, increase child benefit by £6 a week. However much Government supporters may dislike this method, it assists families who face poverty and the unemployment trap and it also assists families with children. Currently £3·5 billion is being spent upon ongoing tax cuts which benefit people who have well above average incomes. Why was not a single word said about that? There was not a peep out of them. They usually have a lot to say about £3·5 billion when it is being spent on hospitals, schools, and social security benefits of one sort or another. But not a word was said this morning by Tory Members about that.

Tory Members suggested that they are worried about the increase in poverty, but they did not produce any figures. The number of families caught in the poverty trap has trebled since 1978-79 from 90,000, which we thought was quite bad enough in former days and I spoke against it then, to 270,000. Each of these families stands to lose more than 75p out of each extra pound that it earns. As for the increase in the absolute number of people caught in the poverty trap, by 1981 the total amounted to 15 million. Those figures are based upon the Government's family expenditure survey for 1981, which was published in 1983. In his recent Fabian pamphlet on poverty Peter Townsend suggested that 18 million people could now be living in poverty in this country. Part of the reason for that increase is the substantial increase in long-term unemployment. Therefore, the number of people who are obliged to resort to supplementary benefit has increased from less than 5 million to well over 7 million.

That is not the only reason for the increase in poverty. It also arises from the increasing number of people who are faced with low wages, even when they are in full-time work. Hon. Members are familiar with the work of the Low Pay Unit. It estimates that several million people do not receive decent wages, even though they undertake a full week's work. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) complained about the fact that young people in particular could price themselves out of work. He bemoaned the level of wages received by young people and suggested that they, too, are caught in the unemployment trap.

Other people always attack the wages councils, which try to protect people in notoriously low-paid occupations, but what interests me is that although they refer to the wages councils and to the wage levels set for young people they never mention the figures. The reason why the figures are never mentioned is obvious. Let me take the typical wages set by the wages councils in November 1984. In textiles, the wage for a 16-year-old is £43·52 a week to £45·07 a week. For a 17-year-old the wage level is £49·72 a week to £52·01 a week. In the retail food industry, for general assistants in the London area, which means that their wages will be well above those offered in other parts of the country, 16-year-olds receive £47 a week. That figures rises to £62 at 18 years old. They cannot be described as high wages.

I agree that some young people in receipt of such wages will live at home. But some 16 and 17-year-olds will have left home abruptly because of family problems and be homeless. Young people living at home are cushioned, but nobody could describe such wages as fantastic. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle mentioned the supplementary benefit rates, but did not give the figures. The 16 to 17-year-olds receive £17·30 a week if they live at home. Between the ages of 18 and 21 they receive £22·45 a week. Wages are low but there is a substantial gap between wages and benefit payments, and one is therefore discouraged from taking the view that young people will refuse jobs because they would rather lounge around at home and live on the amazing sums of £17·30 or £22·45 a week. A young person who has left home receives only £28 a week, although in some circumstances more money might be paid in benefits.

Government Members attack the wages councils and talk about people pricing themselves out of work. They talk about the amount of money paid in benefits and the wage levels, but they never provide the figures. The reason for that is that once the figures are mentioned their case is shown for what it is—an attack on miserable wages, which they want to reduce even more. The way that Government Members talk about high wages and people pricing themselves out of work is almost beyond belief.

Government Members have referred to the proportion of the adult wage paid to young people under wages council agreements. The highest wage under such agreements is £76 a week. When I hear Government Members talk about those wages I think of how many of them spend that amount on a meal for two, and think nothing of it. That is the comparison that we must keep in our minds when they make their disgusting attacks on wages.

Mr. Skinner : They get someone else to pay for the meal, anyway.

Dr. McDonald: That is true. The point is not who forks out the cash, but that none of the hon. Members who have spoken today would feel guilty about a meal costing between £40 and £76. It would not cross their minds, when they returned to the Chamber and decried the high level of wages and the wickedness and stupidity of people in pricing themselves out of jobs, that they had consumed the equivalent of a person's wages for a whole week in one evening. That would not enter their heads. We have to keep that comparison firmly in our minds when listening to Government Members talking about their desire to deal with poverty.

I wanted to say more about child benefit but in my remaining two or three minutes I shall summarise the arguments. The unemployment trap is not as extensive as Government Members would like us to believe it is. The Institute of Fiscal Studies' careful analysis shows that only a tiny minority of social security benefit recipients—4 per cent. in 1983-84—can almost replace lost earned income when they are unemployed.

Conservative Members like to attribute the cause of unemployment to the unemployment trap. To a large extent it exists in their imaginations. When they talk about the trap, as they have done in a more extensive way than

[Dr. McDonald]

I have, the question that occurs to me and to which I have never heard an answer is, what do they want? Do they want wages to increase substantially, or benefits to fall? We never get an answer to that question. They claim that they do not want wages to rise. Do they then want benefits to be reduced, thus increasing, not so much the incidence of poverty, as the amount of suffering and misery of those out of work through no fault of their own, who find that they have even less to live on?

The poverty trap, which largely afflicts families with children, is greatly eased by an increase in child benefit simply because that benefit is not taxed, and does not enter into the calculation of income for family income supplement. Child benefit may not alter the numbers of people caught in the poverty trap, but for those caught in it the benefit increases the amount of money that they have per week. That is why it is so important.

When Conservative Members wanted child benefit to be means tested or taxed, various alternatives were proposed. They must know that means testing is afflicted with inefficiency and low take-up. If we taxed child benefit, whose income would be taxed? The benefit is paid to mothers and, in some cases, to the father if he happens to be primarily responsible for the care of the children. However, essentially, it is paid to mothers, it is their income and it relieves stress in many families because the women know that they have an income with which to care for their children. It belongs to them and no one can take it from them. If child benefit were taxed, it might become regarded as part of the husband's income and, therefore, women would no longer have the right to that money.

Conservative Members have short memories. In 1973 the Tory Government discussed introducing a tax credit scheme that would have taken away the then family allowance from women and given it to their husbands. I remind hon. Members that the massive public opposition to that proposal—I played a part in organising it—meant that the Tory Government had to abandon it. When ultimately the Labour Government introduced child benefit it was given to the mother or the person with the prime responsibility for caring for the child. Women will certainly resist any effort to reduce that income or take it from them. They regard it, not in the trivial fashion in which some hon. Members do, but as a serious contribution towards the care of their children.

The debate has been characterised by a pretended anxiety for poverty and the amount of poverty. If it were serious, Conservative Members would not be dreaming up fancy new schemes of taxation and social security but would be down on their knees imploring their Government, and especially the Chancellor of the Exchequer, radically to redirect his economic and taxation policies.

2.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on his good fortune in coming top of the ballot for the second time running. Let us hope that it will not be 30 years, much as I look forward to those 30 years, before he has the good fortune again. My hon. Friend chose a subject of great importance, and the opportunity to discuss it was clearly welcomed by many of my hon. Friends. My hon will understand that, for various reasons, I cann such a substantive reply as he might have wished t points that have been raised, not least because th security reviews are still under way.

This has been a fascinating debate, and I have r that my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State fo Services and the Chancellor of the Exchequer wi carefully everything that has been said as the Gov bring to a conclusion the exhaustive work of the of social security which have been in train for year.

Before I respond as positively as I can to th made by my hon. Friends, I should deal with som points made by the Opposition, notably during t contribution from the Labour Back Benches, tha hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)——

Dr. McDonald: There were two.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Member for St. Helen (Mr. Bermingham) joined us late in the proceedi cast a somewhat different light on the matter.

The hon. Member for Bolsover, who seems imp to facts, may wish to reflect—I know that i optimistic hope—on the pressure on public s that is caused by the billions of pounds that ha invested in the coal industry, and the significance to the social security budget and to any wor objectives which many Conservative Members mi to pursue. The Government's record is one of wh should be extremely proud, and any suggestion Government or my right hon. Friend the Secretary are uncaring and lacking in compassion, as was sai hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshi Kirkwood)——

Mr. Kirkwood: I said that the Secretary of St lacking in perception.

Mr. Whitney: I ask the hon. Gentleman to joi casting aside that misperception, because the fac otherwise. Since we have been in office, the majo scale rates have increased, at 1983 prices, by billion. Our record cannot be challenged Opposition.

As my hon. Friend's motion recognises, social now accounts for about 30 per cent. of public expe I suggest that that reflects credit on the Governmen ways. First, it shows that we have been successf as much as we could have hoped or as much as v achieve in the future—in controlling and co overall public expenditure. All Conservative M recognise the importance of achieving that objecti sadly, it is not recognised by the Opposition. T Member for St Helens, South wanted us to spen but at the same time was worried about the leve pound. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect on wha happen to the pound if we heeded the siren voices of his hon. Friends.

Secondly, the fact that we spend 30 per cent. overall budget on social security demonstrates the s of our commitment to protect the least well-off in s We know that for too long the burden of Gove spending on the economy was too heavy for it to s That realisation finally dawned in 1976, duri administration of the previous Labour Governmen

the International Monetary Fund had to come in to ensure that public spending was reined back. It is sad that comprehension disappeared quickly from the Labour Benches thereafter. However, we have not forgotten those times and we continue to emphasise the importance of controlling public expenditure. Despite that concern, we have found the resources to provide for a greater number of pensioners. Extra resources have been found for the unemployed, the long-term sick, the disabled and single parents. At the same time, we have maintained, and often improved, the real value of social security benefits. That is a substantial achievement and the cost has been significant.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle suggests in his motion, the effect on public expenditure and the burden of taxation has been profound, with all the significance that that has for our economy and inflation. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), in another important speech from the Conservative Back Benches, offered the House an important, seldom heard and useful quotation from John Maynard Keynes. He reminded us that much nonsense is talked about Keynes. I offer the House another Keynes quotation on the impact of inflation. It runs as follows:

"There is no subtler or surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency. The process engages all the hidden forces of economic law on the side of destruction and does it in a manner which not one man in a million is able to diagnose."

Fortunately, the Government diagnose and recognise that danger but it seems that those who are calling for higher Government expenditure from the Labour Benches do not. They do not understand what inflation does for the poor or for pensioners. I remind the House that over five years the Labour Government achieved inflation of 112 per cent. We are all aware of what that did for those on low incomes, especially the retired. We have worked to lighten the burden of tax and at the same time we have achieved real increases in personal allowances of about 16 per cent. As a result, no fewer than 750,000 have been taken out of tax. We are proud of this record. Of course, the most effective piece of simplification for any taxpayer is to be taken out of tax. The increases that we have introduced to tax thresholds and real increases in earnings mean that those whose earnings have increased in line with the national average have enjoyed significant increases in take-home pay since 1978-79.

The hon. Members for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and for Bolsover talked about those on low incomes. We recognise the problem, but I remind the House that benefits as a percentage of earnings — I refer to the supplementary benefit scale rates, taking into account rent allowances, child benefit net of tax and national insurance deductions—have increased.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister is justifying the Government's record and I have heard Ministers do this on many occasions. The thrust of the debate — this includes the contributions of Back Bench Conservatives — has been directed to ascertaining whether the Government are sympathetic to the idea of integration. I hope that the Minister will deal with that before he resumes his seat.

Mr. Whitney: I hope to do so if I have enough time. It is important that I should deal with the issues that have been raised but it is impossible to deal with them all in the time that is available to me. I wish to make it clear that the Government are not complacent about the level of tax that weighs upon us. I hope that Labour Members will understand that their suggestions, if implemented, would greatly increase the tax burden. At present, a single person earning £50 a week pays £8 back in tax and national insurance contributions.

Much has been made of the complexity of the system. I heartily endorse, as does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the need to reduce its complexity and that is one of the important objectives of my right hon. Friend's reviews. We have heard a good deal about the number of paragraphs in the instruction manual. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said that there were 1,000 paragraphs. Inflation has set in—there are now 16,000 paragraphs in the handbook on supplementary benefit alone and 39,000 staff are required to operate that part of the system. We are definitely seeking an improvement in the system so that it is made simpler and ordinary people can understand it.

We claim progress in improving administration. We have reduced delivery unit costs, although not as much as we would wish. We hope that those improvements will accelerate as we introduce more computers and make better use of information technology.

I should like to endorse the statements of my hon. Friends the Members for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) and for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) about the staff in local offices of the DHSS. In my brief tenure in the Department, I have made a point of visiting as many of the offices as possible. I should like to pay a sincere tribute to the admirable dedication of the staff in dealing with this complex system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle called for the harmonisation of our tax and benefit systems. For many years, that holy grail has been sought by many people. I believe that we all need to read the debate carefully, because so many views have been offered. There are as many solutions as protagonists. Each protagonist sees problems in his own solution. The tax scheme proposed in 1972 would, in today's terms, cost about £8 billion. The basic income scheme is well known. The proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington who made a classic contribution has its critics —not least my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell).

The Basic Income Research Group acknowledged:

"a basic income scheme would be no panacea—and there are many unknowns. That is why considerable work needs to be done to explore the implications and test the feasibility of a basic income scheme."

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle was attracted to the Institute of Fiscal Studies scheme. That scheme would seriously aggravate the poverty trap about which we are all concerned. I believe that the hon. Member for Thurrock exaggerated the size of the poverty trap. Our estimate is that about 150,000 people are affected by it. That is too many, but any of the solutions——

Dr. McDonald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Whitney: No, I do not have time.

The hon. Lady offered a figure of 270,000. Our estimate is 150,000. We have done our best to improve the position with our various taxation changes. Many of the schemes to improve the system have been submitted to my

[Mr. Whitney]

right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the voluminous evidence offered to the social security reviews. I hope that my hon. Friends will understand that, at this stage, I can do no more than say that the contents of the various pieces of evidence have been carefully noted. Those who have submitted schemes will have to be patient and await our conclusions.

I stress that we have been undertaking the most fundamental and thorough review of the social security system since Beveridge introduced it. I am sure that it is right to do so. All the evidence that we have heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House today has underlined the need for it. Our social security policy has to adapt to the needs of today rather than those of the 1940s.

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF TH ELDERLY IN HOME OWNERSHIP BIL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 March

GAMING (BINGO) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee purs Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

DANGEROUS VESSELS BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee purs Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

CHARITIES BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee purs Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

Repair and Improvement Grants (Lambeth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): There is a sick joke about the non-addict who thought that LSD was money. The Government are a sick joke in that they think that not spending public LSD somehow has something to do with the country's economic success. For the Government, it is all right for the bank that likes to say yes, and it is all right to have a listening bank, provided that the customer is not a local authority, in which case the Government pleads that it is economic virtue for the bank to be deaf and mute.

There is not a jot of evidence that the dramatic reductions in housing expenditure that have taken place have had anything to do with the country's economic or social health. If they had, we would reach a Tory paradise at a time when there was so little spending on those in the lower income group for housing that much of Britain would have been reduced to one vast slum.

All the evidence from the country, my constituency and my borough is that unemployment has risen as spending cuts have taken place. The cuts in housing expenditure which come through HIP have been a sick joke for 2,500 private house owners in Lambeth, many of them on low incomes. It has nothing to do with rate capping or revenue.

Those people applied for improvement or repair grants before 26 December 1983. They have now all been told that those applications have been cancelled as a result of the cuts in HIP—the amount of money local authorities are allowed to spend — which were announced in December 1984. Like the homeless, like those on waiting lists, and like those public sector tenants whose homes need repairs, the 2,500 owners, mostly owner-occupiers, have become victims of a cruel Tory economic voodoo. For them, the only evidence that the Conservative economic rain dance works in their favour is the water that is coming through their roofs.

Let me give an example of what has happened to my constituents as a result of the ending of grants in Lambeth because of the cut in HIP. I shall read part of my letter to the local authority about Mr. and Mrs. Daly, who live in West Norwood:

"Mr. & Mrs. Daly own the above property and applied for a Repair Grant in 1982. Mr. Daly is a double amputee"—

his wife receives a constant attendance allowance—

"and permanently in a wheel chair. They have now had a letter dated the 29th January 1985 terminating their grant. They set out to carry out the work in conjunction with Social Services who provided some of the improvements which were then to be followed by repairs under the Repairs Grant Scheme. You can imagine the distress of a man without legs who now finds that the consequential repairs cannot be carried out."

Another family, in the same road as it happens, received a letter from the local authority as a result of the Department of the Environment's guidance about houses in multiple occupation. The letter said, in effect, "Your house is technically a house in multiple occupation." It stated:

"I regret that we are still awaiting legal Counsel's opinion as to whether repairs grants can be given in respect of works to common parts".

Subsequently, because of the delay and the guidance given by the Department of the Environment, that application for a grant was also cancelled.

Somebody else in Upper Norwood made his application for a grant in July 1983. He was told that, because of staff shortages, there was a vast backlog of applications. If Lambeth had recruited any more staff, it would have been condemned by the Government and suffered penalties for the extra wages paid to the staff, under the penalty system that operates in Lambeth. In consequence of the delays in that application because of staff shortages, that person may have lost his grant.

Last Sunday morning I went to see one of my West Indian constituents who is a pensioner and had suffered a stroke. He cannot get about or do things as quickly as others. Purely because of the lapse of time, he finds that people around him have had their roofs repaired, but his grant application has been cancelled. I went to see another person, who also suffered a stroke. His house had been enveloped, but now because of the cuts in Government expenditure in Lambeth, his grant has been cancelled as well.

It is difficult to describe the distress and despair of people who waited for years to have their grants approved and were told properly—because it is the law—that they should not undertake the major repair works before the grant was approved because otherwise their expenditure would not rank for grant. Many of those people took that advice in good faith, and the conditions of their premises, as well as their economic circumstances, have in many cases worsened. There has been more difficulty because people in aging blocks of flats have lost their grant not because of cuts in HIP but because the Department of the Environment gave guidance that common parts expenditure would not rank for grant. Those people suffered some distress, too.

Lambeth is often the bete noire, if not of the Department of the Environment, at any rate of that Department's Ministers. Lambeth has acted with greater conscience and honour than the Tory boroughs of Croydon, Bromley and Wandsworth which, when they saw the clouds gathering for housing finance, gave up the struggle to keep the grants system going and cancelled grants long before Lambeth borough did. Lambeth soldiered on until the death blow of the HIP announcement in December 1984. As nobody outside the House understands what HIP is, I should explain that it is the amount of capital that a local authority is allowed to spend.

When Lambeth got that allocation of funds, it found that the amount for which it had bid had been cut by £77 million to an allowance of £34 million. In case people say that the amount that it bid for was exaggerated, I should say that that also constituted a cut from £40 million, which Lambeth had been allowed to spend in the current year, to £34 million, which it is allowed to spend next year. I am quoting those figures in constant 1985-86 prices.

With 1985-86 housing investment allowances, the Secretary of State has stamped on the fingers of the people who have clung on in hope to the promise that grant applications that were made before April 1984 would be honoured. In fact, Lambeth stopped taking applications on Boxing Day 1983. The Government knew of the need and distress that would be caused if the amount that Lambeth could spend was cut so severely. I personally got hold of Department of the Environment officials whenever I saw them in Lambeth. I talked to one at the opening of a

[Mr. John Fraser]

neighbourhood centre on the Angel Town estate, and told him clearly of the distress that would occur in Lambeth if the grant programme that was in the pipeline could not be maintained. I asked him to convey those things to the Minister.

The Government knew of the scale of the problem because they got the information from the HIP returns that are sent in by each local authority. I shall give the figures for Lambeth. There are 10,740 unfit homes in the private sector and 2,470 homes which, while not being unfit, are not provided with the basic amenities. Some 11,450 homes, while not being substandard, need renovation. The Government knew from those figures and from what I told officials what the scale of the problem was. They knew because I wrote to the Minister for Housing and Construction when he was considering the housing investment programme for the current year and told him of the acute distress that would be felt by many poorer owner-occupiers if the money allowed to Lambeth was not sufficient to sustain the programme. The Government also knew it from letters from the acting housing director of Lambeth borough council, Mr. Alex Docherty, who wrote on 28 November 1984, giving the views of the housing committee. He said:

"'the council makes a supplementary bid for Housing Investment resources in order that the Council can continue to meet both the moral'"——

moral obligations ought to mean something to the Government—

"'and statutory obligations of improvement grant applicants'. The purpose of this letter is to request both an additional HIP allocation for 1984/85 and 1985/86 in order to meet the demand from renovation grant applicants. As you are aware, the government initiated a most successful national campaign in order to stimulate the number of renovation grant applications, and Lambeth as a direct consequence had a four fold increase in the number of applications. The Council will spend approximately £9 million on Renovation Grants in 1984/85 despite the Council limiting discretionary grants to those applicants in Housng Action Areas . . . If the Council were to continue with even this modest policy, meeting the 4,800 case backlog (excluding insulation grants) then it would cost the Council some £20 million in 1985/86 for renovation grants alone. The level of expenditure on grants without a substantial increase in HIP allocation for 1985/86 would jeopardise seriously the Council's ability to undertake renewal works to its existing stock of dwellings and to provide for the shortage of dwellings from which this borough suffers."

What was needed was put on the record by Members of Parliament and officials, and yet it was announced as near as possible to Christmas, to minimise criticism—it was a pretty poor Christmas present for Lambeth and its citizens — that the council would be allowed £34 million. The Government knew that Lambeth's existing legal commitments, including between £8 million and £9 million in grants that had been approved but not paid out, required about £33 million and that therefore only about £1 million would be left for any other housing expenditure during the year. The Government knew that and disregarded the warnings.

The grants arrangements had been a beacon of success —almost the only one in the Government's housing policy. Ministers have constantly told us how the level of grants has risen from relatively small figures in 1978-79 when there was a big construction programme to about £900 million last year. What was a beacon of success has become, to use Macbeth's words, a case of, "Out, out, brief candle". That is certainly the case for many of my poorer constituents.

Before the 1983 general election, the Prime Minister told housing authorities to spend, spend, spend on capital, and accused them of underspending. They were encouraged to take grant applications at a subsidy of 90 per cent., the owner-occupier having to find only 10 per cent. The Government must have known that the numbers of applications would explode. In 1981-82, we had 804 applications. In 1982-83, we had 3,277 and in 1983-84 there were 3,875 applications until they were stopped except in special categories. That increase resulted from Tory policy which was applied in good faith by a Labour-controlled council in Lambeth. The Government have shattered the hopes and, in some cases, the lives of 2,500 people in Lambeth who have waited for grants to come through.

Lambeth does not pretend that it is alone in this catalogue of disaster as about 250,000 people throughout Britain are faced with similar circumstances, as is recorded in a letter from the National Home Improvement Council dated 26 February which states:

"the early indications are that many local authorities will find themselves in a similar position to Lambeth regarding the termination of repairs and improvement grants. I know you will want to concentrate on the issue of Lambeth's problems but you might like to know that many of these problems are reflected throughout the country and you may feel free to quote the National Home Improvement Council's concern with the national situation."

I come to what I am pleading for this afternoon. I should like the Government, by creative accounting, by compassion or by any route that they think fit, to find a supplementary allocation of money to deal with the moral commitments for the granting of repair and improvement grants in Lambeth. That supplementary provision should be restricted to the poor, the pensioners, the disabled and to those in lower income groups. These are some of the impoverished people in the community, who in all good faith have waited, sometimes for two years, for essential money for essential repairs to their property.

It should not be impossible to find some way to provide this money by unlocking, perhaps, part of the £5 billion of capital receipts hi-jacked by the Treasury, perhaps by allowing the local authority to deal with its outstanding mortgage debt and exchange it with the banks for money, with which they are awash, to provide for grants. The Government are more skilled than I in manipulating finances. I plead with them to grant Lambeth permission to borrow so that it is able to honour its legal and moral commitments, which were undertaken as a result of the Government's programme of increasing grants and encouraging applications before 1984.

I have one final plea to the Government. Please do not let them tell either England or Lambeth that we are better off for what they have done.

2.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has raised, in a moving speech, the problems of a number of his constituents who would like to apply for improvement grants but find that Lambeth council has been unable to process them. I hope to be able to put in a slightly broader perspective some of the remarks that he has made, because he has glossed over some of the

achievements of this Administration in developing the home improvement grants policy. It is perhaps appropriate that this matter should be debated by two former councillors of the London borough of Lambeth, who have first-hand experience of some of the problems facing the local authority.

I shall begin by outlining what our policy has been on improvement grants in recent years. In 1982, the Government introduced some special measures in the Budget that increased local authority spending on home improvement grants. In April of that year, we raised the maximum rate for repair and intermediate grants to 90 per cent. and we made additional capital allocations available to help local authorities to meet the increased demand for grants. As the hon. Member is probably aware, intermediate grants are for the provision of missing standard amenities such as baths, sinks, inside toilets, together with any necessary repairs, while repairs grants on the other hand are for substantial and structural repairs to houses built before 1919.

These special measures were introduced to boost grant spending and to increase the amount spent generally on renovating substandard housing stock. The figures show that that intention was fully realised, with spending on grants increasing from £200 million in 1981-82 to £425 million in 1982-83, and to over £900 million in 1983-84. That £900 million figure compares with £90 million spent in the last years of the Administration in which the hon. Member served. The fact that the amount going on improvement grants has increased tenfold under the present Government did not come out in the hon. Gentleman's speech. The hon. Gentleman talked about the brief candle, but this year, even after the ending of the special measures, spending on improvement grants is still expected to exceed £700 million as against £90 million in 1979.

The total resources available have risen to unprecedented levels and, as a result, an enormous amount of worthwhile improvement and repair work has been carried out. We did that to enable both local authorities and householders to give priority to and to realise the importance of renovating one of our greatest assets—our housing stock. However, we made it clear that there was no way in which resources on such a vast scale could continue to be made available indefinitely, and we never claimed that that would be the case.

Grants made by local authorities for repairs and for the installation of basic amenities are, nevertheless, still available at grant rates of up to 75 per cent. and up to 90 per cent. in the case of hardship. It is still a generous system. Even what is likely to be spent next year, in 1985-86, is well beyond the figure of £90 million that we inherited.

The priorities of local authorities and of householders have now been changed and there is a greater realisation of the importance of the stock. The local authority also benefits from the new regime because of the generous Exchequer contributions towards improvement grants. Exchequer contributions are paid at the rate of 90 per cent. for intermediate grants and repair grants for substantial and structural repairs to pre-1919 houses. For improvement grants the contribution is 75 per cent., or 90 per cent. towards those grants given in priority cases.

In Lambeth — obviously the priority for the hon. Member — spending on improvement grants has risen substantially since 1981-82, but rather more slowly than the national rate of spending. In 1981-82 it was £1·2 million. It went up to £1·8 million in 1982-83, and up to £4·2 million in 1983-84. Expenditure in 1984-85, as the hon. Gentleman said, is likely to be about £9 million, and in 1985-86 it could be just under £9 million.

If Lambeth had avoided building up such a large backlog of grant applications, much of the expenditure now being faced in the current year and next year could have fallen in 1983-84, when local authorities were, in effect, able to spend without limit on improvement grants. Compared with the performance of other London boroughs, Lambeth was slightly slow in using the advantage of the special regime introduced in the 1982 Budget. If Lambeth had been able to use that advantage, it would have avoided not only the frustration of the long waits and the disappointment that the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his speech; it would have eased much of the present pressure on the borough's housing capital resources.

The hon. Gentleman has raised, as the subject of his debate, the termination of repair and improvement grants in Lambeth. As I am sure he knows, for mandatory grants for things such as missing standard amenities or essential repairs, where statutory repair notices have been served, the grants are available as of right, provided that the qualifying conditions are met, and there is no question of termination of those grants.

I think that the hon. Gentleman was speaking about the discretionary grants, where local authorities have the widest possible discretion whether to approve applications and, if so, at what rate. That enables them to adjust their policies according to local housing needs and priorities. The repair and improvement grants form part of their HIP allocations, and they are in direct competition for funds with other parts of the local authorities' housing programme, new build schemes, repair and improvement of existing stock, local authority mortgage schemes, and lending to housing associations. It is for each authority to decide how much of its available resources to use for such grants. I recognise that authorities are faced with difficult decisions on establishing priorities. The initial HIP allocation for Lambeth for next year is £34·32 million, and the hon. Gentleman developed in his speech the case that that figure was inadequate.

We advised local authorities in November 1983 that they could plan their 1985-86 programmes on the basis that their allocations in that year would be at least 80 per cent. of their 1984-85 allocations, and the allocation that we have made to Lambeth meets that assurance fully. We have honoured that commitment. The allocation made is 88·5 per cent. of the initial allocation made for 1984-85, and 85·4 per cent. of the final allocation made for 1984-85.

For many years now we have recognised Lambeth's special housing problems, which I do not deny for a moment. The London borough of Lambeth has received the largest allocation made to any of the London boroughs. We have done that despite a very poor spending performance in 1981-82 and 1982-83, when Lambeth did not even manage to spend anything like the allocation we made available to it, let alone make use of its capital receipts. For 1984-85 the allocation made was almost £40·2 million. For next year the allocation is £4 million more than to any other London borough. So we have given Lambeth substantial allocations in the current and in the coming financial years.

[Sir George Young]

Next year the initial allocation could be supplemented by an additional 5 per cent. in due course. All authorities which have complied with our request last year for voluntary restraint on capital expenditure will be eligible for such supplementary allocations. On top of that it would be open to the local authority to supplement its programme through the use of the prescribed proportion of capital receipts.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned other ways of complementing the allocation by refinancing the mortgage programme. Like him, I have read in the press recently that local authorities, including Liverpool, Southampton and St. Albans, have managed to increase their allocations by refinancing their mortgages, and that is open to Lambeth and to anyone else.

As for improvement grants, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the figures with the knowledge that, of the 48,000 private sector stock in the borough, nearly 11,000 were considered unfit, more than 2,000 lacked basic amenities and more than 11,000 were in need of renovation. Of course, improvement grants should be made a priority, but the Government have rejected the approach of earmarking the allocation and telling the local authority how much it should spend on improvement grants because we believe that these decisions are best taken at local level. It is up to Lambeth to decide how much of its allocation to devote to discretionary grants and how much to allocate to other parts of its programme.

We have drawn to the council's attention the Government's priorities. In the letter that announced the allocations sent on 20 December last year, as well as underlining our main policy of increasing the level of home ownership we drew attention to our priority of encouraging the repair and improvement of the existing housing stock in both the public and the private sectors and concentrating resources in the housing programme on capital provision to those in greatest housing need.

It is important, given the need to contain public expenditure within realistic limits, for authorities to determine clear priorities for housing investment and to develop the most cost-effective solutions available.

Looking at Lambeth and at the number of empty dwellings, we see that in 1982 the council reported 2,072, in 1983 2,280, and in 1984 2,001—a reduction of fewer than 70 over that last period. Of the 2,000 empty in April last year, almost 600 had been empty for more than a year. I hope that Lambeth council will look at that stock. If it cannot bring them into good use itself, it should dispose of them, giving first preference to those who are either on the waiting list or existing council tenants and try to bring those empty dwellings, which represent more than 4 per cent. of the total local authority stock, back into use.

Looking next at rent arrears—resources available to the local council to help do some of the improvements on its estates—we see that in Lambeth they stood at £8 million. In the last three years the council has not increased rents in line with the increases recommended by my Department to take account of inflation. Again, that has denied the council the use of resources for housing.

I was going through next year's estimates for Lambeth council. It proposes to spend £1·5 million next year on architects' fees for new build schemes, some of which may never come to fruition. That money could have been reallocated to improvement grants to meet the needs of Mr. and Mrs. Daly, about whom the hon. Member spoke so movingly. I wonder whether the council has its priorities right in allocating so much in resources to new build schemes which may never get off the ground. That is a matter that might be raised with the local authority.

I have said that I feel that much of the present difficulty could have been avoided if Lambeth had managed to keep up with the volume of grant applications. I am sorry that many people in the borough and in the hon. Gentleman's constituency have missed the opportunity that we gave them through our improvement grant initiative. The council has given the impression that new approvals on discretionary grants have virtually ceased, but I understand that it is still prepared to consider certain special cases, and I hope that it listens to what the hon. Gentleman said about Mr. and Mrs. Daly and the other families. In any event, the council has entered into considerable commitments this year which will still lead to a substantial expenditure next year on improvement grants. I hope that the council will soon be able to clear the backlog of commitments and begin to consider applications on a wider front once again.

As for the wider implications of improvement grants, the Government's view is that it is primarily the responsibility of home owners to keep their own dwellings in repair, using their properties as security for borrowing to finance the improvements. Private expenditure on home improvements greatly exceeds that by the public sector. Even looking at 1983-84, the year when local authority expenditure on grants was at its highest, up to 90 per cent. of the total spent on improvements came not from the public sector or the local authorities but from the private sector. Certainly there are cases where owners need assistance with necessary repairs and improvements, and we are trying to ensure that home improvement grants are focused increasingly on those who really need help with this essential work. Our review of improvement policy generally is coming to its conclusion, and we hope to issue a consultative paper on our proposals next month.

I have to listen to what the hon. Gentleman said within the constraints of the allocations that have already been set. I will do what I can to help Lambeth, perhaps through the urban programme. I am not indifferent to its problems, but I believe that much of the responsibility rests with Lambeth council.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 4 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

1. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the latest position on the teachers' pay claim and the effect of industrial action by particular teachers' unions on pupils' education in Wales.

9. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals his Department has to protect pupils' interests during any industrial action taken by teaching unions.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. John Stradling Thomas): Teachers' pay and conditions of service in England and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. So far, industrial action in Wales has been limited to the half day strike last Tuesday by members of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers. I deplore this action because it can only interfere with the preparation of pupils for this summer's public examinations; but it is of course for the local education authorities to do what they can to minimise the effects of the dispute on pupils.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that by taking strike action teachers harm the education of children and their professional status? Does he further agree that teachers can enhance their status only by accepting a much closer link between performance and pay?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: My hon. Friend has put his finger on two important points. First, I have always been taught by educationists that the finest method of teaching is by precept. By taking this action, teachers are setting a very bad example. Secondly, teachers have gone in for disruption although, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said last week, their pay has kept pace with inflation since 1979.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although most teachers give sterling service to the pupils in their charge, they might have learnt from a recent example that blind loyalty to the leaders of their unions will repay them ill?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: Underlying the strike is the fear of the possibility of assessment. There are few professions or other occupations in which continuous assessment of performance is not inherent. That is especially true of Members of Parliament.

Mr. Rowlands: After the miners, do the Government now consider that the teachers of Wales are the enemy within?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: Most certainly not. Most teachers in Britain, especially in Wales, give excellent service and are vital to our future.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the Minister assure the House that, if the teaching dispute lasts one year, the Government will not spend the first six months telling the House and the country that they have nothing to do with it and the second six months actively trying to prevent negotiations?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I do not accept the basic premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. My answer to both parts of his question is no, Sir.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister agree that the Government's action in response to the teachers' dispute has been set by the policies that they followed in respect of the miners' dispute? How else can we explain the Government giving misleading statements, misleading teachers' unions about their intentions and doing nothing other than sowing bitterness and confusion in the minds of teachers?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. The Government have been clear about this. There is an offer on the table. It is not the Government or the management who have misled teachers in this case; it is the leaders of the teachers' union which has done so. If the teachers pursue their claim as they are doing at present, it can only mean fewer teachers or fewer resources for other vital educational matters.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are no winners, only losers, in this strike, and that the losers are the children? Surely one cannot expect a 12 per cent. increase in salary when inflation is running at only 5 per cent. a year.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. I wish that the teachers, who are responsible and well-educated people, would bring this point home to the leaders of their union. The union leaders are not acting in the best way for the union members or for the children, who are the really important people in this matter.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Does the Minister agree that if we are to continue attracting to the profession people of talent and dedication who have spent four years at university to qualify it is time that they were paid better than unqualified and untrained office staff?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I believe it is well known to most hon. Members that there is an offer on the table for the restructuring of salaries which would lead to that highly desirable result. It would be much better if teachers, instead of going for disruptive action, returned to negotiation and sorted out that aspect in order to improve the quality of education. That aim is at the heart of the Government's policies.

General Practitioners

2. **Mr. Hubbard-Miles** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of general practitioners practising in Wales in 1978-79 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

17. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the increase in the number of general practitioners in Wales since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): At October 1978, including trainees and assistants, there were 1,418 general medical practitioners practising in Wales. The corresponding figure for October 1979 was 1,448 and for October 1983, the latest date for which figures are available, 1,620.

Mr. Hubbard-Miles: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer, which once again clearly demonstrates the improvement in health care in Wales. How has the doctor-patient ratio been affected by the increase in numbers?

Mr. Roberts: I am glad to hear my hon. Friend's observation that those figures show our concern to continue improving primary health care in Wales. The average doctor's list is 1,975 patients. This compares with 2,148 patients per doctor in 1978.

Mr. Best: Is my hon. Friend aware that many general practitioners regard this Government as the most successful for a long time in the provision of health care? *[Interruption.]* This year £9 million is being allocated to major hospital developments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also taken an initiative with regard to renal dialysis in Bangor, Swansea and Carmarthen. *[Interruption.]* The Department is examining provisions to help cancer sufferers in North Wales, which I welcome, and to expand the bone marrow transplantation unit. A major initiative has been taken to examine the incidence of heart disease in Wales. These matters should surely be acknowledged by everyone.

Mr. Roberts: In spite of all the jeering from the Opposition, my hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that the NHS in Wales is advancing on all fronts. Recurring revenue resources have been increased by 10 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1983-84. There has been a further increase of 2·7 per cent. in 1984-85, and there will be a further 3 per cent. increase next year.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that the NHS is advancing backwards on one front — the limited list of drugs? The overwhelming majority of GPs in Wales have strongly protested about the Government's actions. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, because of the Government's initiative, thousands of disabled people and pensioners are worried that they will not be able to obtain the drugs that they need for their conditions? Will the hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that, since he has responsibility for this matter in Wales, he will think again about the Government's actions?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that only some one third of prescriptions are paid for. The remaining two thirds are free. With regard to the limited list, the list of some 30 drugs submitted for consultation resulted in a number of representations from GPs and patients in Wales, and we are grateful for them. As a result, the Government have published a new list of some 100 drugs, and we are convinced that they will be adequate to meet all clinical needs.

Sir Raymond Gower: Do not those figures reflect the fact that, whatever other items of Government expenditure have been affected by necessary changes, a high priority has been given to health services throughout the term of this Government and their Conservative predecessors? Does that not make nonsense of the untrue propaganda to the contrary?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right. It is high time that the Opposition acknowledged the advances that have been made in the National Health Service in Wales instead of adopting the cribbing attitude that they have to date.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Will the Minister turn his attention to unemployment among junior doctors; in particular those who have spent four years after qualification being trained for general practice? Those people, on qualifying, have to apply for about 50 or 60 places before they are successful. It is practically impossible for doctors who have qualified overseas to obtain posts. There we have a case of racial discrimination of the first order.

Mr. Roberts: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. He is aware of the contribution to the National Health Service by doctors from abroad. All hon. Members will be ready to acknowledge that. Unemployment is, of course, a matter that junior doctors encounter in the process of obtaining the jobs that they want.

Cynon Valley

3. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make additional resources available to Cynon Valley district council to enable it to take steps to reduce unemployment and further improve housing conditions within its area.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I note that, as in the Welsh day debate on Thursday, there are more Welsh Conservative Members than Welsh Labour Members in the House for questions today. The answer to the hon. Lady is no. The Cynon Valley district council already has substantial resources available to it. In determining its capital allocations, full account was taken of housing conditions in the Cynon Valley. The Aberdare travel-to-work area is in the upper tier for regional industrial assistance, and the area can draw upon the resources of economic development bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency and NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall pre-empt the point of order which I believe is coming.

Mr. Rogers: I was not seeking to raise one, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Clwyd: That was a completely inadequate response to the position in the Cynon Valley. The Minister is clearly still unaware that 48 per cent. of private housing is unfit for human habitation and that we have the highest unemployment rate among males in Wales. His answer will be regarded as completely unacceptable and politically vindictive and motivated. Does he realise that

at the present level of funding to areas such as Cynon Valley it will take over 50 years to restore housing to the adequate conditions in which people can live?

Mr. Edwards: If what the hon. Lady says about conditions is correct—the Government vastly increased resources available for improvement of the housing stock in Wales—it is surprising that during the past three or four years the Cynon Valley authority has not used the resources available to it, has not declared any housing action areas, has not taken advantage of low-cost home ownership schemes, and has not taken full advantage of the variety of new initiatives that can be taken, such as enveloping, to improve the housing conditions for those for whom it is responsible.

Mr. Grist: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest damage to the Cynon Valley, which has drained more money from its inhabitants and resulted in a greater threat to employment there, has been done by the miners' strike? Does he accept that those who, disgracefully, have tried to lead it in the locality have done more damage to the constituents than almost anything else could have done?

Mr. Edwards: I agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, the greatest contribution that could now be made to that area would be for everyone involved to get together to restore the health of that industry, to take advantage of the record resources which the Government are making available to the industry, and to seek to restore the markets upon which that industry depends.

Mr. Allan Rogers: This is not a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to have caused confusion. In respect of the Secretary of State's preamble to his answer, does he not realise and accept that the reason why, on occasions, people do not come along to Welsh days is his utterly awful and crushingly boring speeches?

Mr. Speaker: That was almost a point of order. I was going to say that even Ministers should stick to the question.

Mr. Barry Jones: The Secretary of State is giving very inadequate and evasive answers. Will he begin a fresh, meticulous survey of housing conditions in Wales, because the Cynon Valley problems exist throughout the length and breadth of the Principality? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the people of Cynon Valley and other deprived communities could have decent housing if we could take the 18,000 unemployed building workers off the dole queues and set them to work building decent houses for people in Cynon Valley and other parts of Wales?

Mr. Edwards: A Welsh housing survey is coming up in 1986. If the hon. Gentleman's wishes for the Cynon Valley are to be realised, it will require the local authority to make full use of the resources and schemes that are available.

Private Nursing Homes

4. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of private nursing homes in Wales; and what is his estimate of the percentage of total health care in Wales provided by this sector.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At 31 December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, there were 50 private nursing homes in Wales. They provided 1,414 beds in the private sector, and that compared with the average daily available beds in the NHS at the time of 22,474, of which 49 were authorised for private use.

Mr. Davies: Is the Minister satisfied with the standard of provision in those private homes and with the level of monitoring? May I refer him particularly to Highmead residential home, run by the Care agency in Cardiff? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in that home residents are expected to pay £175 per week three months in advance? Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that pay cheques for staff employed by that home have bounced and staff have had to wait up to three months to receive their pay? Is the Minister further aware that in that home auxiliaries are carrying out the functions which should be carried out by properly trained and qualified staff? Finally is the hon. Gentleman aware that residents in that home have complained that they have not received enough to eat? Is that the standard of provision that the Minister wants? If it is not, what will he do about it?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman should know that private nursing homes must be registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984, and that it is up to the local health authority to inspect the premises and see that all is well. It must do so at least twice every 12 months. With regard to the nursing home that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, I shall certainly ensure that that case is looked into.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that the new code of practice raising standards in those homes—in itself, very welcome—accompanied by the revised scale of payments which the Department of Health and Social Security is prepared to make to cover the costs in those homes—which is also desirable, in itself—are none the less putting a squeeze on those homes, many of which may be forced to go out of business and to throw their occupants on to the resources of the local authority?

Mr. Roberts: It is certainly the case that registration is not automatic. In view of the valuable contribution that those private nursing homes make to health care, it is absolutely essential that they should be of the highest standard. I understand the point made by my hon. Friend, but in general we would be extremely sad to lose any private homes, because of the value of their contribution.

Dr. Roger Thomas: To what extent does the Minister feel that the mushrooming of small private nursing homes, which are often overseen by untrained people, is alleviating the average waiting time for admission into the numerically stagnant places in local authority homes for the elderly, which are fast becoming mini-geriatric hospitals?

Mr. Roberts: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman, especially in view of his experience of medical practice, would welcome the fact that private nursing homes help to reduce the waiting list for National Health Service hospitals. Surely that is to be welcomed. Furthermore, patients and doctors have the right to choose private treatment. Far from harming the NHS, the main effects are additions to the country's health care resources and reduced pressure on the NHS.

Gwynedd

5. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives have been taken by his Department recently to improve the prospects of securing new job opportunities for Gwynedd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The county continues to benefit from Government policies and programmes. including road construction, factory building, urban programme and European Community schemes, and from the work of the agencies within Wales. Regional industrial assistance continues to be available for much of the county.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that he and his Department deliberately and specifically misled local authorities in Wales when he told the areas which were downgraded from development area to ordinary assisted area status and eligible only for selective financial assistance, that they would continue to benefit from regional policy? Will he now recognise that selective financial assistance is in no way regional policy, and that if a factory in Birmingham is willing to do work that would otherwise come to Wales, the work will go to Birmingham rather than to Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I do not acknowledge anything of the sort. That is pure invention.

Mr. Best: Is my right hon. Friend aware that only this morning I was in contact with his Department regarding the negotiation of a European Investment Bank loan for a garment manufacturing company, which will come to Holyhead and provide 300 jobs in the near future?

Mr. Edwards: Yes, Sir. I am also aware that there are a considerable number of selective assistance applications for Gwynedd and if they are turned down it will be for very good reasons, as in other parts of the country. They are turned down either on grounds of viability or because there is a surplus of capacity. It cannot make sense to put money into a project in one part of the country if that will destroy jobs in another part.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: When will the Minister be able to make a statement about the regional development boundaries as they apply to the borough of Aberconwy? Previously, I raised with him the question of differentials between the two parts of that borough since the recent changes. Will he now make a statement on the subject?

Mr. Edwards: I have no information to give the hon. Gentleman about the actual boundaries, which, as he knows, relate to travel-to-work areas. We are examining whether, in terms of qualification for European assistance, we can make any measures such as we did in mid-Wales following the last changes.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman know that there are only 500 vacancies for 15,500 jobless people in Gwynedd? Is he aware that in Holyhead one man in four is jobless? Will he tell us of any detailed plans that he has to bring work to this stricken county? Does he agree that Bangor, Caernarvon, Pwllheli and Holyhead are black spots by any definition?

Mr. Edwards: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are carrying out a major road building project on the A55, which is probably the largest single contribution that can be made to that county. It is one of the largest road building projects in the country. The Gwynedd area h benefited from £200 million since 1979 on ma infrastructure programmes. A major factory buildi programme is still being undertaken by the Wel Development Agency, there is the urban programme, a European community assistance is also available.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. view of the wholly misleading and insubstantial respons I beg to give notice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Members may not s that the response was misleading. He may believe that is incorrect.

Hospitals (Radioactive Waste)

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of Sta for Wales how many of the hospitals in Wales whi discharge radioactive waste use Amberlite IRA 410 res to remove radioiodine before discharge.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the usage Amberlite is not held centrally, but I understand that IR 410 resin is not generally used in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Wardell: Does the Minister accept that a cle environment free from artificial radioactivity is desirab and that this is especially so in an area such as Bracel Bay, in my constituency, which is frequently used f recreation, but which is very close to the discharge radioactivity from Singleton hospital? Because of t untreated nature of this radioactive waste and t possibility of insufficient mixing, as well as t concentration of that waste in both organic and inorgan materials, will he arrange for a special survey into wheth it is possible to have concentrated and shielded protecti of this material so that it can decay and so that t radioiodine is reduced by 99 per cent. of its radioactivi before discharge takes place?

Mr. Roberts: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that w want as clean an environment as possible, but I am su he will accept that we also want as healthy an environme as possible. He surely does not object to the use radioactive material for medical purposes. That is wh happens at Singleton hospital in Swansea. I wrote to t hon. Gentleman on 31 January this year and told him:

"The discharges from Singleton Hospital are within the limi laid down in the current authorisation which was issued in 1979 There is no danger whatsoever from the discharge radioactive material in use at that hospital.

Wintex-Cimex 85

7. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State fo Wales whether he is satisfied with his Department involvement in Wintex-Cimex 85; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am absolutely satisfied th it is rigiht for the Welsh Office to participate in this so of exercise, although on this occasion the involvement wa very small.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Minister accept that thi exercise is provocative in terms of its cold-war stance given that we are pursuing arms control negotiations? I it not also concerned with internal security, and does no

his Department's involvement point to the fact that he has now achieved devolution for Wales by means of departmental civil servants planning for war?

Mr. Edwards: That is the most arrant nonsense that I have heard for a very long time. There is nothing provocative in testing plans and communications systems aimed at coping with some future crisis. What we are doing has been done by successive Governments for many years.

Railway Preservation

8. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the Wales Tourist Board concerning the role of railway preservation both in job creation and the generation of economic activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: While I have not recently discussed this matter with the Wales Tourist Board, I am aware that the board has given considerable support to the great little trains of Wales, both by way of marketing services and by financial support to individual railway societies totalling some £500,000 over the years. I welcome the jobs and economic benefit which the railway societies can bring to Wales.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and acknowledge the excellent work that has been done. Does he accept that the transfer of some locomotives from the scrapyard at Barry to the Big Pit project at Blaenavon, which I think has the support of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse), would undoubtedly be welcome and would generate further economic activity in the Blaenavon area by enhancing a tourist project which could no nothing but good? Does he recognise that the problem is the purchase of the old locomotives for which, it seems, neither his Department nor the Wales Tourist Board has specific funds available? Will he bend his mind to this problem?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I am more than sympathetic. I had the great privilege and pleasure of officially opening the Big Pit museum. I know that I can appeal to my hon. Friend when I say that if we are unable to find the funds, I am sure that he, with his expertise in the private sector, will bend his will and mind in an effort to help fully.

Mr. Geraint Howells: In view of the excellent work carried out by the Wales Tourist Board, will the Minister give an assurance that he will try to provide extra financial aid to the board during the next few years?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: There have been some advances in the promotion of Wales. I shall always be mindful and do everything that I can to try to find extra funds, if resources are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In any such discussions with the Wales Tourist Board, will my hon. Friend consider further experiments with passenger services being introduced on freight lines, as British Rail is doing in a most interesting experiment on the Aberdare to Cardiff line? It introduced shopping services before Christmas and it has provided a similar service for each home international rugby match this year.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I have no direct responsibility for British Rail operational matters in Wales, but I thoroughly approve of such flexibility in experimentation. We still have a long way to go. Some local authorities have put forward very interesting proposals along these lines.

Mr. Abse: Will the Minister be a little more forthcoming about the provision of Government funds for the purchase of the locomotives to which the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) referred? Does he not know how important it is, in an area of such dereliction as the top part of my valley, Blaenavon, that everything possible should be done to stimulate the tourism which the Big Pit attracts? Would that not provide, for a very small sum, a considerable opportunity to assist in glamourising one of the most beautiful parts of the Eastern valley?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: As I said earlier, my sympathies lie entirely with the questioners. However, the question that I was asked by the hon. Gentleman was whether I would be more forthcoming. With respect to the House, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no, Sir.

European Regional Development Fund

10. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of grants which Wales has received from the European regional development fund in each of the past two years and in the current year to date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Net commitments for the European Commission's financial years of 1983 and 1984 were £45·1 million and £57 million respectively. No allocations have yet been announced for 1985.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Welsh economy would be much weaker if these grants had not been received? How much has Wales received in total from the fund since its inception?

Mr. Edwards: The Welsh economy has been greatly strengthened by the infrastructure provision. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would put down a question on the ERDF commitment for the whole of Wales since its inception. Undoubtedly our membership of the European Community has enabled us to obtain many inward investment projects. I should like to take this opportunity to express my pleasure at the fact that Brother Industries of Japan is the tenth Japanese company to announce its decision to establish a manufacturing plant in this country, this time in Wrexham.

Part-time Employees

11. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many part-time employees there are in his Department; and what information he has about the numbers in other organisations in Wales for which he is answerable.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 1 December 1984 there were 121 part-time employees in my Department. Comparable information in respect of other organisations in Wales for which I am answerable is not held centrally.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I can well understand that my right hon. Friend is not in a position to provide any figures, but, as we are unlikely to get back to full industrial employment, is there not now a case for gaining further acceptance of the idea of part-time employment as a preferable alternative to total idleness? Would it not be a good idea for the Government to give a lead in this matter?

Mr. Edwards: While not necessarily accepting my hon. Friend's premise, I can assure him that my Department will give sympathetic consideration to all reasonable requests for part-time work. The Government are consulting the Civil Service unions about the guidance that should be given on the provision of viable schemes — for example, the day-care of the children of civil servants. We are developing along these lines and are sympathetic to the point made by my hon. Friend.

Depo-Provera

12. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any representations calling upon him to reconsider the decision to allow a licence for the long-term use of the contraceptive drug Depo-Povera in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received representations from the Cardiff Community Health Council and from the Welsh office of the Labour party.

Mr. Coleman: In view of the refusal by the United States Food and Drugs Administration to grant a long-term licence, and the results of the World Health Organisation's survey on the long-term use of Depo-Provera, which seems to show a possible link between the long-term use of that drug and a higher incidence of cervical cancer, will the hon. Gentleman begin the procedure to withdraw the licence granted in April last year for the use of that drug?

Mr. Roberts: Let me make the position clear. My understanding is that the preliminaty findings of the World Health Organisation study show no evidence that using the drug increases the risk of breast cancer. The American public board of inquiry's recommendation to the Food and Drugs Administration not to market Depo-Provera in the United States is being considered by the Food and Drugs Administration and it has not yet decided what action to take on that recommendation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health has asked the Committee on Safety of Medicines to consider the American report. Before granting a licence for the use of Depo-Provera as a long-term contraceptive in Britain, the United Kingdom licensing authority had the benefit of a report on the safety of the product by a panel of experts.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Diocese of Durham

20. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the number of clergy receiving remuneration in the Diocese of Durham in each of the last five years.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners (Sir William van Straubenzee): From 1980, as at 31 December, the number of full-time clergymen was 299, 292, 298, 307 and 307.

Mr. Jones: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is not numbers that count, but the quality of leadership, in putting over the message of the Church? Is he aware that there is widespread dismay among lay members of the Church of England at the quality of leadership given by the Bishop of Durham, with his constant espousal of beliefs which are not those of the Christian Church?

Sir William van Straubenzee: It would be helpful my hon. Friend were to read the remarkable speech by t Archbishop of Canterbury when the subject of doctri was being debated by the General Synod on 13 Februar I shall send him a copy. I must not take up the time of t House quoting from it, but the general message is one which my hon. Friend would approve.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not a matter for the Church England, not the House of Commons, how many pries there are in the Durham diocese? Is it not time that t House of Commons stopped messing about with t internal affairs of the Anglican Church? Many of us in t Anglican Church think that it is time we decided our ov affairs, without Jews, Methodists, Moslems and all so of other people interfering in our internal affairs.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The hon. Gentlem undoubtedly reflects a point of view widely shared in t Church, but at the moment the Church Commissioners a answerable to the House and it is for them only that answer, although the ingenuity of hon. Members is su that a good deal is often hung on that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the dioce of Durham.

Mr. Adley: In view of the figures that my hon. Frie has given for Durham, is it not clear that at least in t Church of England in Durham there is no risi unemployment? Are the people of Durham getting goo benefit from the extra people involved?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am perfectly certa that in relation to those to whom the answer refers t answer is emphatically yes.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Will the hon. Gentleman take in account the fact that the Bishop of Durham served in Lee before he went to Durham? Last week I asked people the —whether Moslem or anything else—what they thoug of the Bishop of Durham and I was told that the cha shows that he cares for the people of Durham and whatev one's political views, that is a good thing for a clergyma

Sir William van Straubenzee: Yes. I do not want enter into public comment about a Member of anoth place, but all hon. Members understand that sometimes th words that we use when we are in a position of authorit have to be carefully chosen if they are not to b misinterpreted.

Unemployed Persons (Assistance)

21. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member fo Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners what resources the Church Commissioners have spe towards assisting the unemployed; and if he will make statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Commissione make a contribution towards employment in so far as th greater part of their stock exchange investments are in th ordinary shares of United Kingdom companies. They hav also taken up opportunities for investment in projects i areas of high unemployment.

Mr. Greenway: I note that contribution, but can m hon. Friend give any examples of schemes to help th unemployed at diocesan and parish level? Will he conside initiating in-service training schemes to improve th theology of some bishops and clergy?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners are not responsible for in-service or other training of bishops.

On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I can give him the examples of investment in the Lancashire and Merseyside enterprise fund, which has been set up to provide capital for new and existing smaller businesses in Lancashire and Merseyside; investment in four regional unit trusts in the north-east, Yorkshire and the north-west; and a scheme in Finsbury to provide small workshop units to serve the local community.

Stipends

22. **Mr. Chapman** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, by how much the contributions from parishes have changed in the proportion of the total payments for stipends in the last five years.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The contribution from parishes for clergy stipends rose from 29 per cent. of the total in 1979 to 41 per cent. in 1981 and 44 per cent. in 1984.

Mr. Chapman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the increasing contributions of churchgoers have been principally responsible for the significant increase in stipends in recent years? Is that not the finest possible example of the old adage that charity begins at home?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The contributions of the laity, increasing proportionately in terms of stipends year by year, have been enormously important, but I hope that my hon. Friend has also noticed that the Church Commissioners have been able, by prudent management, to increase their contribution and that they are wholly responsible for all pensions.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Commissioners rightly make much of their record in efficiently managing Church funds, which are largely used for stipends, how does the hon. Gentleman justify the Commissioners not selling their land at Molesworth to the highest bidder?

Sir William van Straubenzee: Because the land at Molesworth is not vested in the Church Commissioners. It is vested in the diocese of Peterborough and is not the concern of the Church Commissioners. If the hon. Gentleman would like to know the address to which he should make his representations, I shall happily send it to him.

Diocese of Leicester

23. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the average clergy stipend within the diocese of Leicester in 1984; and how it compares with other dioceses.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The average incumbent's stipend in July 1984 was £6,565 in the diocese of Leicester and £6,771 nationally. Leicester came 39th out of 43 dioceses.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that stipends do not reflect a living wage and that there are some difficulties with a number of clergy who are having to claim supplementary benefit? Will my hon. Friend go back to the Church Commissioners and encourage them to increase all kinds of stipends so that we have the best people coming forward, rather than some strange people from Durham, for instance?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I do not think that it is possible to generalise about stipends or to say whether a particular man is eligible for supplementary benefit. I should be surprised if that were so in the case of an incumbent. If my hon. Friend has an example, perhaps he will write to me. However, he underlines the continuing desire of the Church, both laity and the Church Commissioners, to improve the stipends of full-time clergy.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who is concerned about the stipends of local priests, is also concerned about taking people to court? Is not it clear that the hon. Member for Leicester, East would take Jesus Christ to court because he was a revolutionary who tried to change society?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I do not think that I am answerable for whatever my hon. Friend may or may not have said.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that if any priests are claiming supplementary benefit they are committing fraud, as no one is entitled to claim if he is in full-time work? But perhaps the hon. Gentleman will draw attention to the fact that many priests do have to claim family income supplement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: That was in my mind when I gave my earlier answer, so I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. However, he and I must be careful when trying to evaluate the numbers of those who are eligible for family income supplement.

THE ARTS

Private Sponsorship

24. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will report progress in the encouragement of private sponsorship of the arts.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): Business sponsorship has increased from £500,000 in 1976 to £15 million and is still increasing. I am glad to say that the business sponsorship incentive scheme launched by my noble Friend the Minister is proving extremely popular. Awards made during its first six months will reflect £2·5 million of new sponsorships.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful for those figures, but does my hon. Friend agree that the recent diatribes of Sir Peter Hall et al——

Mr. Cormack: What did Al say?

Mr. Chapman: He is to be found among others—underline the need for the Government to stay out, as far as possible, from the politics of arts funding? Might not that best be achieved by the Government encouraging, through tax concessions, donations to arts funding?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have made various concessions on the tax side for funding, but it is important

to recognise that it is no part of the Government's view that private donations could ever wholly replace the need for subsidy. However, they are a very useful adjunct to it.

Mr. Freud: What is the total sum of private sponsorship for which the Minister is looking? Will the hon. Gentleman promise that if any theatre raises an especially large amount of money by private funding, it will not be harmed by a cut in grant?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not for me or for my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister to answer for Arts Council funding policies. However, I am sure that it is no part of the Arts Council's policy to penalise anybody who raises money from private sources.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend agree that neither Sir Peter Hall, nor Al, nor even any fresco would have had quite the problems that we have had in recent years if the Government had taken on board the excellent, unanimous, all-party Select Committee report of 1983?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend will want to remember that the Government have done very well by the arts since 1979, with an increase in funding in real terms of about 18 per cent.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not surprising that Sir Peter Hall should find it surprising that the Arts Council is a political body, given that it is run by two Tories and that the Minister for the Arts worships at the altar of monetarism? Do the Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have any proposals in hand for tax concessions for businesses that give money to the arts?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Arts Council is not a political organisation, much though the hon. Gentleman would like it to be. I think that he would be unwise to predict exactly how Sir William Rees-Mogg votes or has voted. As I have said, the Government have taken various steps to make it easier for companies and individuals to give, and we keep the whole area under review.

Arts Organisations (Funding and Efficiency)

25. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will initiate further independent inquiries into the funding and efficiency of arts bodies which are major recipients of public finance.

Mr. Waldegrave: No, Sir. My noble Friend sees no case for doing so.

Mr. Murphy: Does my hon. Friend agree that if such inquiries took place the facts could be established, and they might be preferable to the wringing of hands and to the chorus of woe, gloom and doom that we hear from the Greek chorus on the subject of arts funding?

Mr. Waldegrave: I concede that that would be useful. On the other hand, we are rightly constantly pressed to keep the position of the Arts Council at arm's length from the Government. If there were a whole galaxy of separate inquiries, I am not quite sure where the Arts Council would be left.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that a particular problem has been caused by the activities of the GLC in threatening to withdraw funding from national companies? Will my hon. Friend give a progress report on the situation? Does he agree that the d and uncertainty which the GLC has created sho why it should be abolished?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree that the extra u created by the GLC's brinkmanship is to be re hope that it will clarify its plans and re uncertainty that it has caused.

Mr. Jim Callaghan: Does the Minister r when the Prime Minister took office she said would be no candle end economies in the arts? I that statement, the dismay, consternation and f expressed in the arts world by such eminent pers Peter Hall, the fact that seven members of the dra of the Arts Council have resigned and that last 11 leading London theatre groups express opposition to the arts cuts, will the Minister no and the Opposition in calling for the resignati worst Minister for the Arts that we have ever worst chairman of the Arts Council that we have and the worst secretary of the Arts Council that ever had before the candle is finally snuffed o arts?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is an example of th lobbying which does not help the arts. There ha 18 per cent. real terms increase in spending on The hon. Member for Heywood and Middle Callaghan), coming from that area, should sh gratitude for the fact that one of the problems w the Arts Council is grappling is directing more to the provinces and away from London.

Mr. Sedgemore: Is it not time for an inquir funding and inefficiency of the Arts Council, completely lost the confidence of the art wor widely regarded as a subservient arm of the Gov

Mr. Waldegrave: It is widely regarded in tha people who want to cause mischief. I am sure tha Member for Hackney, South and Shoredit Sedgemore) wants a politicised Arts Council. Council is wholly at arm's length from the Gov and that is how it should be.

Mr. Jessel: Is my hon. Friend aware of the outer London about the transfer of music, ch orchestral societies' funding to the Greater Lon Association from the Arts Council, which, it is fe be to the detriment of outer London? Will he that?

Mr. Waldegrave: I was not aware of that unti Friend drew it to my attention. I shall ensure chairmen of the Arts Council and of the GLAA aware of those worries, which are important.

Mr. Buchan: Is not the truth that the arts h grossly under-funded this year, with less than h inflation rate being accounted for? Not only the Theatre, but almost every theatre in Britain is af that not the reason why the directors of alm theatre in Britain will be meeting tomorrow to views on the crisis? Will the Minister tell the Mi the Arts that if he cuts the Arts Council's funds at least persuade the Government not to cut b authorities' funds? Is he aware that the GLC intervened to save the National Theatre? What a for a Conservative Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been a large real terms increase in funding since this Government were elected. I thought that the chairman of the Arts Council came out much the better in the interchange in the Sunday papers.

National Heritage

26. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on the Government's policy for preventing the loss to the nation of important and irreplaceable elements of the national heritage.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the House will be aware, the Government announced on 21 February their intention to add £25 million this financial year to the National Heritage Memorial Fund. This is a major practical demonstration of our concern for the national heritage.

Mr. Howarth: I offer my warmest congratulations to the Government on the reprieve of Keddlestone Hall, Weston Park, and Nostell Priory. Will my hon. Friend now turn his attention to equally good effect to future provision for the acceptance of pre-eminent items in lieu of capital transfer tax? Will he and his noble Friend make strenuous representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that, in the event of the Chancellor finding it impossible to abolish the tax altogether on 19 March, future provision for acceptances in lieu will at least be at a worthwhile level rather than at the derisory level intended?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall draw those remarks to the attention of my noble Friend. In the current year, the AIL provisions have brought some attractive gains to the country, such as works by Sir Jacob Epstein, Renoir Barbara Hepworth and others. Many less spectacular bu useful items have also been accepted.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister agree that the Cotteslo theatre is an important part of the national heritage? Wil he congratulate the GLC on having the guts to fight for it

Mr. Waldegrave: We should all be happy if the GLC were able to find the money while meeting its lega obligations to set a rate. That would be useful.

Museums

27. **Mr. Adley** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on developments concerning the power of museums to charge for entry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's policy is not to impose general admission charges for the main collections of the national museums and galleries. It is a matter for the trustees' discretion. There is already a well-established practice of charging for entry to some museums, outstations and special exhibitions.

Mr. Adley: Do the Government believe in incentives? If so, may we be assured that if museums raise funds off their own bat, they will not be clobbered by the Treasury, which, amazingly, seems to want to reduce their grants by the very amounts of money that they have raised by using their initiative?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Discussions on the matter continue. We have had an arrangement in the first year at the Greenwich museum, whereby that has been the outcome.

Coal Industry Dispute

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about recent developments in the coal dispute.

Yesterday, at a delegate conference of the National Union of Mineworkers, a decision was made to end the industrial action which has been conducted by some sections of the NUM over the past year. The conference decided that there should be a return to work tomorrow.

The Government regret that this unjustified dispute, which has taken place without a ballot, has done so much damage to miners, to mining communities and to the coal industry. Without this dispute, the industry would have received £800 million of capital investment during the past year, miners' pay would have been substantially above average industrial earnings, 1,000 firms would have been persuaded to convert to coal, export orders would have been obtained, and any miner in a pit facing closure would have been given the opportunity of continuing to work in the industry or of taking advantage of early retirement provisions more generous than those available in any other industry.

The dispute has inflicted heavy damage on the coal industry and on those companies which supply that industry with plant and machinery.

However, I am pleased to tell the House that during the period of this dispute industry at large was able to obtain the energy supplies that it required. There were no power cuts due to the dispute and there are still nearly 12 million tonnes of coal stocks at Britain's power stations.

I would like to express the Government's appreciation to all those people whose efforts have ensured that Britain's energy supplies have continued to be available.

I believe that the country would also like to thank the police, who, throughout this dispute, have ensured that organised mob picketing did not deprive people of their freedom to go their place of work. Sadly, during the dispute, 1,391 police officers have been injured.

It is now vital that the coal industry swiftly returns to normal working and recovers from the damage of the past 12 months.

The National Coal Board has stated that obtaining full safety in all pits is its first priority, so that production can be restored.

Both the National Coal Board and the Government hope that the coal industry will now take full advantage of the considerable opportunities available both at home and abroad.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): After 12 months, more than 100,000 members of the NUM will tomorrow go back to work without a settlement. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the negotiation of a settlement would have been the best way—for the miners and the industry—to end the dispute? If so, why did the Government not accept the NUM's proposal that it was prepared to sign and implement the full NACODS agreement, when the Secretary of State said on 4 February:

"if the NUM wished to accept it, it could have a settlement today or tomorrow."—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 622.]

Is it not a fact that until the modified colliery review procedure is in operation all pits will remain open? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that Mr. Peter McNestry, the general secretary of NACODS, said that no such modified review procedure can place until the NUM is party to the agreement?

What is the Government's attitude on the cru of victimisation, bearing in mind conflicting rep different areas? Will the right hon. Gentleman on the statement by the Scottish area direc Wheeler?

The cost of the dispute has been assessed inde as being in excess of £3·5 billion. Will the r Gentleman confirm that figure?

Finally, the fortitude and tenacity with which women of the coalfields have fought to uphold a their communities and jobs has the admiration ar of the Opposition. I hope that the right hon. G will now facilitate the means quickly to ar negotiated agreement, which can be the only wa for the industry and the country.

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman's f totally wrong, and he must have obtained them Scargill. If he did so, that explains their inaccu very much the Government's wish to have an a and a settlement. It is a great pity that the Opposi such influence as they have on the NUM, did n that the union should accept the ACAS co proposal of October 1984. Throughout the disp has not been an occasion when the Opposi officially criticised Mr. Scargill for making towards reaching a settlement.

There was a further basis for a settlement foll talks that took place between the Coal Board and when a document was prepared which reflecte consideration of the points which the TUC had Coal Board. That document included totally the agreement. The right hon. Gentleman ment NACODS agreement and quoted from *Hansard*. that he refers to the quotation that was given s ago by Mr. Scargill about that agreement. I can because the terms in which he described it woul to be unparliamentary. That prevented any s being arrived at last October.

The cost of the dispute is a complicated matte which will have to be examined carefully. It i compared with the cost that would have arise Government agreed to a totally unreasonable with the mob being used to support it.

The right hon. Gentleman has praised the m have been on strike for this long period. I share an admiration for those who do that with a sense to their union. I admire also those who, in th tradition of the NUM, decided to have a ballot worked throughout the strike.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House th statement will follow this important statement. A there will be a public expenditure debate, which and hon. Members have been calling for regula business questions. I propose, therefore, questions on this statement to continue until 4 There will be other opportunities to raise the i flow from it.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South) deplorable that the right hon. Members for Sal

(Mr. Orme) and for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) have both refused to advance the proposition that today is the right day for wounds to be healed—*[Interruption.]* I refer the House to "Today" this morning. I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to remember that there are 60,000 men in industries which are dependent upon the coal industry who should be considered equally in the difficult times that lie ahead.

Mr. Walker: The dispute has been totally unjustified, as we have always claimed. What is important now is for investment to be made in the industry and used wisely so that lost markets may be regained, and for unity in the mining communities and the NUM to be restored.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I congratulate the Secretary of State on distancing himself from the "worthwhile investment" school of thought about the events of the past year. Will he recognise that the only worthwhile investment would be for all parties to learn the lessons of this disaster? The union must learn that politically motivated strikes based upon intimidation, rather than on the ballot, will not work. The NCB must recognise that arrogant and high-handed management will not work. The Government must recognise that throwing money at individuals in the form of generous redundancy payments is no substitute for dealing with the social and economic problems of communities affected by pit closures.

Mr. Walker: Of course I agree that it is wrong for a union to involve itself in a political dispute, especially without a ballot. Pits have closed for economic reasons under all Governments, but the present NCB and the present Government have done far more than any previous Government to ensure that there is an instrument for bringing new jobs and enterprise to mining communities, and have provided early retirement provisions on a more generous scale than has ever been conceived before. In any decent tradition of dealing with an industrial problem in a civilised way, the Government and the NCB should claim full credit.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Now that the laws of economics are to apply to the coal industry, will my right hon. Friend try to encourage the necessary moves towards low-cost, large-scale production by, first, trying to shift the difficult but necessary decision-making process for pit closures away from the television screen and into the hands of local, decentralised NCB management and, secondly, putting some real political and financial firepower behind NCB (Enterprise) Ltd so that it can develop alternative jobs for miners?

Mr. Walker: Yes, it is important that all negotiations on the future of pits, in terms both of positive investment policy and of the need to close pits that are no longer economic, should be discussed at local and regional level on the basis of all obtainable knowledge. I also place great importance upon the activities and success of the new NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): After spending £5 billion of taxpayers' money and throwing the full apparatus of the state—police, magistrates, judges, the media and the Government themselves — against the miners, the right hon. Gentleman has totally failed to win the support of the majority of miners for the Cabin policy. Without good will, which is wholly lacking, th is no future for the coal industry.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the struggle the miners, backed by their families, and under leadership of the NUM, has given hope to millions people who have poured millions of pounds into support of the miners and their communities? Is he aw that when history comes to be written—that may sooner than the Cabinet would wish—the struggle be seen as a turning point in the battle against monetari and against the attack on full employment?

Mr. Walker: Of all those with militant views who h taken part in the dispute, there is no one for whose vie I have less respect than the right hon. Member Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). When he had responsibility the industry, he paid the miners worse, invested less in industry and offered redundancies on far worse ter Compared with the record of the present Government, right hon. Gentleman's record in those respects appalling. His enthusiasm for the dispute has been only enthusiasm for the Marxist views that he holds.

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Wh paying tribute to my right hon. Friend for the work that has done, may I ask him to bear in mind two matters t require immediate consideration? The first is the vi question of markets for coal, and the other is reconstruction of the finances of the NCB. The boar debt is considerable. It is virtually bankrupt. It is in ne of revival, if anything can be done.

Mr. Walker: It is true that the NCB is insolvent a depends upon finance from the Government to continu It is important that the industry conquers new marke Bearing in mind the quality of our coal reserves, availab mining machinery, miners and management, there is reason why the industry cannot, with competitive produced coal, conquer new markets.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Secretary State agree that his rather aggressive approach to h statement led to his omitting to refer to the considerab efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Salfor East (Mr. Orme), who devoted enormous energy to tryi to secure a resolution of the conflict? Had the Secreta of State put in the same effort, the country might have bee saved £2 billion. Will the Secretary of State confirm th the NACODS agreement will now apply in full?

Mr. Walker: The answer to the hon. Gentleman latter question is yes. The board informs me that it endeavouring to have talks with NACODS in the ne future to sort out details and implement the scheme Knowing the right hon. Member for Salford, East (M Orme), I have no doubt that he tried genuinely throughou to obtain a peaceful settlement. I am only sorry that th leader of the NUM has not listened to the right hon Gentleman as much as he should.

Mr. Peter Hordern (Horsham): In view of the courag and tenacity of those miners who have continued to wor in the face of great provocation throughout the dispute will my right hon. Friend confirm that the investmen programme of the NCB remains intact?

Mr. Walker: The NCB's investment programme wi have to be reviewed to take into account the considerabl damage that has been done to plant and machinery and coa

[Mr. Walker]

faces during the dispute. Management at regional level must review carefully how available resources might be used to benefit the industry. There is no doubt that there is substantial, good and rewarding investment to be made which will enable the industry to succeed.

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that, on 28 January, and again on 18 February, I asked him to grant an amnesty to all those miners who had been arrested on picket lines and had since been acquitted? There are now 1,416 of them. On both occasions the right hon. Gentleman promised a reply. Has the chairman of the NCB replied, and if so, what is the answer?

Perhaps the Secretary of State will now clear up the latest negotiating position. On 26 February he sent a letter to Peter Heathfield saying that the NUM should accept the TUC document

"as the firm agreement on the main issues of the dispute".

Is that the Secretary of State's stance now, and the board's, or is the NACODS agreement the preferred basis for talks?

Mr. Walker: The board's views were expressed in the eight points in the programme that was put to the TUC. They concern the managerial policy pursued by the board. Among those eight points is the NACODS agreement. TheNACODS agreement will therefore be considered, as envisaged in that document. As to the right hon. Gentleman's question about an amnesty, the matter will be dealt with by the board according to individual circumstances, irrespective of whether the courts have been involved. If someone has been found guilty — [HON. MEMBERS: "These are innocent men."] If the board considers that someone has been involved in physical violence or damage to a pit, it will take appropriate action. The person concerned will have all of the protections available if the Coal Board takes any wrongful action.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Is my right hon. Friend aware that no group of people is more anxious for a reconciliation than that which took most of the casualties in the defence of civil liberties—the police? To assist in the process of reconciliation, will my right hon. Friend urge those who have made absurd charges against the police to drop them? Will he also make it clear that, although minor offences can properly be forgotten, the criminal law must take its course when violence is involved?

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to say that there are men working in the coalfields where the management has decided that minor offences are not sufficient to warrant sackings.

When the correct and accurate history of this dispute is written, it will be seen that the country owed a great deal to the police for the way in which they conducted their affairs in relation to communities, miners and those working in the steel industry, and in protecting freedom.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that during the past couple of hours the Kent and Scottish branches of the NUM have refused to go back to work until the 42 members of the NUM in Kent and the 250 members of the NUM in Scotland who have been sacked have been reinstated? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that there will be no peace in the coalfields until a general amnesty is given to the 728 miners who have defended their union, their class and their community during the past 12 months?

Mr. Walker: Knowing the hon. Gentleman's passion for supporting the majority decisions of the NUM delegate conference, I am sure that he will do all that he can to persuade the Kent and Scottish branches to obey.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that there are two victors in this dispute: first, democracy, which is the lifeblood of our society; and, secondly, the reputation of the police service, which has been enhanced in this difficult matter? Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity of writing today to the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers conveying the appreciation of the House to the 1,300 police officers who have been injured and wounded during the dispute?

Mr. Walker: I share my hon. Friend's respect and admiration for the actions of the police. That is why I made that a major point of my statement to the whole of the House of Commons.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to deal specifically with the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) about the 1,400 men who have been acquitted?

Mr. Walker: As always with the management of any concern, the fact that a person has been acquitted of a particular offence is not a guarantee that he will continue in employment if, in the management's view, he has committed an act that is against the interests of the company. *[Interruption.]* If a person who has proved himself to be innocent is dismissed, he will have all the rights that he has with regard to wrongful dismissal to take action against any employer who takes that irresponsible action. As always, employers must decide whether a person is suitable to continue in employment in a particular company.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will my right hon. Friend join me in repudiating the attacks that have been made on the Scottish Coal Board representative, Mr. Albert Wheeler, whose conduct throughout this dispute has been exemplary? Will my right hon. Friend join me in advising miners in my constituency to ignore the advice that they have been given by their leadership and get back to work? In Scotland, 700 jobs have already been lost because of a loss of pit faces. It is necessary for the miners to get back to work and build the industry.

Mr. Walker: Before the NUM delegate conference on Sunday, a substantial proportion of Scottish miners had returned to work. I hope that the rest will return to work tomorrow.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): As the Secretary of State referred yesterday to the need for reconciliation, will he ensure, as an earnest of his endeavours, that sufficient money is available to the areas where the closure of pits is likely to be expedited because of what has happened during the past 12 months? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to sack Ian MacGregor, to show the miners that he means business?

Mr. Walker: The answer to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no. On the first part of the

question—I tried to say this in an earlier reply—the board must now carefully consider where best to use the substantial financial facilities that will be available to the industry to secure its future. There will be places where damage has been done which will be a priority for restoration. I am afraid that there will be other places where damage has been done which it will be impossible to make good.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that in those pits where work goes back to normal, including the abandonment of the overtime ban, miners will be properly rewarded, and that the board will negotiate on a pit-by-pit basis to see that the arrears of pay come along as they should have done long ago?

Mr. Walker: Yes. It is the board's objective, and has been throughout, to see that miners' pay is at a good level. The offer that it made before the dispute started would have put miners' pay more than 25 per cent. above average industrial earnings. I am only sorry that the dispute has meant that for many miners that has been lost. Likewise, all miners should recognise that it is in their interests and in the interests of the future and recovery of their industry that normal working, including the removal of the overtime ban, starts as quickly as possible.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that the union is correct in calling for an amnesty for all those who have been sacked by the Coal Board, just as previous Governments have given an amnesty to other groups in our society, such as the Rhodesian sanction busters, who were let off the hook many years ago by a previous Tory Government, and those companies which fail to file their returns and break the law? They are given an amnesty at the end of every financial year to carry on their tax dodging and all the rest of the fiddles. If the miners' union cannot obtain an amnesty for all, resistance must continue, the overtime ban will not be called off, and we shall carry out the war of attrition which will result finally in victory.

Mr. Walker: I am glad that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition have made it clear that they consider that employers have to take the decision. I think that they are right.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to encourage British and overseas inward investment in the mine closure areas? Will he also consider, with his colleagues in the Government, extending the successful enterprise allowance scheme to encourage miners who take early retirement to set up their own business? Can he help in that way?

Mr. Walker: Yes. My hon. Friend has been active in trying to give incentives and encouragement to new businesses. A combination of what the Government have succeeded in doing in that sphere, together with the money, facilities, accommodation and management facilities available through the new enterprise company, will provide good opportunities in mining communities for the creation of the kind of small businesses which my hon. Friend has done so much to champion.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Now that the Secretary of State has failed to break the NUM's unity in South Wales and other areas, will he turn away from the uneconomic burning of oil—it has cost £1·7 billion during the course of the dispute—and study the real economics of energy policy? Will his Department now institute the review of energy policy which the Welsh Church leaders called for a month ago?

Mr. Walker: No one has so completely destroyed the unity of the National Union of Mineworkers as has Mr. Arthur Scargill. That union is now divided from top to bottom, as well the hon. Gentleman knows. On the question of energy policy, the Government made it clear that their objective was to have mining as an important and expanding industry, producing coal at low cost, with high productivity and good pay for the miners. The Government continue to pursue that policy.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Newport, West): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that no one will welcome the decision to return to work more than will the steel workers of South Wales. Will he make it clear to the NUM and the railway unions that orders that have been suspended or lost because of the dispute will not return automatically to those industries? They will have to earn them. The only way to earn them is to get back to work properly and to end the overtime ban.

Mr. Walker: There is no doubt that the future of the industry depends upon a speedy return to normal working to take advantage of the investment and the new markets that are available. That is in the interests of all. With regard to the steel industry, looking back on the dispute, I think that we all admire the manner in which steelworkers and the steel industry did not just overcome the problems of mass mob picketing, but in recent months have been reaching record production figures.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Would it not be the mark of an honest man for the Secretary of State to admit that all the terrible consequences that have flowed from the dispute could have been avoided if the Government had not deliberately provoked the strike a year ago, through the National Coal Board, in the mistaken belief that miners would be brought to their knees in a matter of months? Before the right hon. Gentleman engages in too much self-righteous gloating, will he reflect on the fact that the damage that the Government have done, the anger, the bitterness and the resentment will be endemic in the industry for many years?

Mr. Walker: That sermon should be preached to the president of the National Union of Mineworkers. There is clear evidence that last March, had the terms available been put to the miners in a ballot, as they have always been put to the miners in a ballot—*[Interruption.]* Let me remind hon. Members that one third of Britain's coalfields stuck to the NUM's normal tradition of balloting and voted 70 per cent. against strike action.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the interest in the statement, I proposed to allow a further five minutes on it.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): Does my right hon. Friend accept that when the coal mining industry was nationalised in 1946 it owed nothing to commercial logic but everything to the folk tales and myths of the Labour party and the Labour movement? Does my right hon. Friend also accept that the strike of 1926 took place over 60 years ago, long before many of

[Mr. Cecil Franks]

today's miners were born, and in circumstances totally different from today's industry? Will my right hon. Friend therefore consider, together with his colleagues, the privatisation of the mining industry?

Mr. Walker: The important thing is to restore the mining industry from its present position of considerable insolvency and damage. No immediate consideration is being given to privatisation.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the Secretary of State not understand how the dispute started? The closure of Cortonwood was something which no trade union leader or trade union worth his or its salt could not but take up. Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his answer to my right hon. Friend for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) about an amnesty? That single issue in one of the most peacemaking issues on which the Secretary of State could put his finger. Will he see to it that the people who are taken back do not have a break in their service, but that their service is continuous, because that is very important? Does the right hon. Gentleman further accept——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. McKay: It is important. Does the Secretary of State accept that the biggest danger to the coal industry is Ian MacGregor and that he is not the man who should take the industry through to the peace which the right hon. Gentleman wants? The names that I gave him many months ago are of the people whom he should be considering to bring the industry into the future.

Mr. Walker: With regard to the origins of the dispute, every miner at Cortonwood was circulated immediately with the fact that the NCB was willing to go through all the normal procedures, and it was the NUM which decided not to turn up for those procedures. I repeat that, on that or any other issue, if the NUM thought that it was something that miners throughout the country would support, it could have done the normal thing in the NUM and gone for a ballot.

With regard to an amnesty, I am quite certain from the manner in which the management of the Coal Board has already acted, that the people involved in minor cases, where there has not been serious physical injury to Coal Board employees or considerable damage to its property and machinery, will have their cases carefully considered. The NCB has no desire other than to employ people who are decent people to employ. That is how the NCB will operate.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): With regard to a possible amnesty for the perpetration of violence, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the vast majority of people in this country are decent and law-abiding and have been absolutely appalled at what they have seen on their television sets and read in the newspapers, and would be equally appalled if they were now to see that might was right?

Mr. Walker: I think I am correct in saying that the majority of the House takes that view as well.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Does the Secretary of State agree that there is no surprise at the decision of the Scottish area not to go back to work tomorrow, in the light of the blanket refusal of the director of the NCB in Scotland to consider lifting the ban on any individual person who has received his books? Will the right hon. Gentleman please help the situation in Scotland and say to the NCB that it must reconsider its position and start reconciling itself to reality?

Mr. Walker: I can only say that when there is normal working, the conciliation procedures of the NCB allow any individual case to be looked at fully.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Before the Secretary of State's money-grabbing friends start to influence him towards privatisation of the coal industry, may I point out that the reason why the coal industry was nationalised in the first place was that it was incompetently managed and, when it was taken over by the state, was completely bankrupt? That was pointed out as far back as 1919 by the Sankey commission. The only thing that has not changed in the coal industry between pre-nationalisation and now is the bad, incompetent management, especially on investment decisions.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman considers that it is bad, incompetent management, especially on investment, under this Government, I can only say that it must have been absolutely dreadful under the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways in which the industry can begin to repair the damage that has been done is to end the overtime ban? Does he further agree that that would help many of those who have needlessly suffered grievous financial hardship during the strike? Will my right hon. Friend ask the Coal Board to do all that it can by putting forward at least part of the money that is on offer by way of wage increase to bring that about?

Mr. Walker: We know that the Nottinghamshire miners who have been at work have decided to get rid of the overtime ban. After the considerable financial losses of the families and mining communities, and in the interests of the future of the industry, it is essential that normal working, including the removal of the overtime ban, is achieved as quickly as possible.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Now that the Secretary of State has had his few gloating moments when he made his statement, will he look at the Royal Commission's report on energy, because the Prime Minister has regularly said that uneconomic pits must close? If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the report, he will see that most of the pits in Britain are uneconomic, according to the report. Therefore, what will the right hon. Gentleman do about uneconomic pit closures? Will he come clean now and tell us how many pits will close?

Mr. Walker: The Government have announced in their projections of investment policy substantial investments in the industry for the years to come. One Royal Commission has also said that for environmental reasons we should be totally nuclear. In fact, the Government have taken the view that the coal industry has an important, major future in producing coal on a competitive basis. We have been willing to put more investment into that than were the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Does the Secretary of State accept that we in Scotland are not a

region, but a nation? We are a country, and we are entitled to have an organised return to work in conformity with the decision of the NUM special conference yesterday, in the same way as any other area. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the area director of the NCB is preventing that by his brutal declaration of a policy of victimisation, and that because of that the dispute in Scotland is to continue? Where is the language of conciliation there? Will the right hon. Gentleman inquire into that? We want justice and fairness in Scotland, and we are entitled to it.

Mr. Walker: As I explained, the conciliation procedures of the NCB, when normal working applies, deal with any such problems. Many of us observing the Scottish scene very much regret some of the violence that took place there.

Northern Ireland (Terrorist Killings)

4.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I shall with permission, Mr. Speaker, make a statement on last Thursday's attack by the Provisional IRA on Newry police station and on later incidents in which two members of the security forces died.

At about 6.40 on the evening of 28 February, nine mortar bombs were fired at Newry police station from a lorry parked about 200 m away. The lorry had earlier been stolen near Crossmaglen. Seven mortar bombs exploded. One of them hit the prefabricated canteen at the back of the police station. Three exploded at the front of the police station, two more exploded on derelict property opposite, and the seventh exploded in the garden of the rear of this property. The two mortar bombs which did not explode landed in a street near the police station. Nine police officers, including two policewomen, were killed. Seven other officers were taken to hospital, one of whom is still detained, and 23 civilians also received treatment.

Later that evening at about 10.30, a device beside a telegraph pole in Pomeroy, County Tyrone, exploded as an Ulster Defence Regiment foot patrol passed. One soldier, a part-time private in the regiment, was killed and another soldier was injured. Yesterday morning outside St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic church in Enniskillen, two terrorists shot dead an off-duty RUC officer in front of his wife and children. The terrorists escaped in a stolen car towards the border, and abandoned the vehicle at Belcoo. The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for all those brutal murders.

I reviewed security arrangements with the deputy chief constable and the general officer commanding on Friday and they are now being urgently re-examined. So far as the attack at Newry is concerned, no building can be made impregnable, and the risks faced by the security forces in Northern Ireland are well understood. But I have already approved a capital expenditure programme for police building of between £20 million and £25 million in the next three years, including a new police station in Newry. We shall now look carefully and urgently at possible further physical measures for the protection of buildings and at all the procedures designed to forestall attacks of this sort.

These attacks on Protestant and Catholic members of the security forces show once again the callous savagery of the terrorists. I know that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of the dead and injured, and our appreciation of the courage and steadiness of the security forces. I believe that this House will want to send out another message: we must not and will not bow to terrorists—the terrorists will not win.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): We in the official Opposition unreservedly join the Secretary of State in his expression of sympathy for the families of those who lost their lives, and with members of the RUC, the UDR and the civilian canteen workers who suffered injury. We echo his tribute to those in the security forces who are continually subjected to such appalling risks. We condemn, as he does, the cold-blooded use of murder for any political objective, and we believe that any cause is degraded and disgraced when it is pursued at the expense

[Mr. Peter Archer]

of broken bodies and broken families. We hope that the Secretary of State will welcome the forthright condemnation by the Taoiseach of these atrocities.

While we endorse the proposals of the Police Federation for a programme to reinforce and protect police buildings — I thank the right hon. Gentleman for confirming that that will be implemented as a matter of urgency — does the Secretary of State appreciate that inevitably and understandably there will be calls for less restrained responses, which may be as likely to penalise the innocent as to punish the guilty? Will he examine any new security measure which may be suggested to ensure that it is not counter-productive and precisely the sort of action for which the terrorists must have hoped? Does he agree that solutions proposed in the immediate aftermath of such a series of outrages may be better considered when the judgment of us all is somewhat calmer? Does he further agree that there can be no end to the bitterness and bloodshed until a stable political settlement is achieved, on which a substantial majority of decent, law-abiding people in both traditions can reach agreement, and forget their differences? Will he do all he can to ensure that acts of mindless terrorism do not impede that objective?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his opening remarks. I endorse what he said about the forthright condemnation by the Taoiseach of what happened at Newry, and of the specific offer of help which Dr. FitzGerald made in the same statement. We must consider calmly all measures, and adopt measures which, on consideration, will have the effect of helping us to destroy terrorism. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, political progress is certainly essential. He would not regard, or wish the House to regard, it as a substitute for robust security policy because those with whom we are dealing in the struggle against terrorism are not interested in and would not be appeased by discussions or political concessions made in their direction.

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): I thank the Secretary of State for his expression of sympathy to all those who were bereaved in my constituency last Thursday night. Will he ensure that a full inquiry is conducted into this brutal and callous attack, that the inquiry examines all ways in which such attacks can be prevented in future and how perimeter surveillance can be improved to ensure that no repetition of Thursday's attack can ever occur again? Finally, will he assure the House that financial restrictions will not be a consideration in the strengthening of border RUC stations?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he phrased his questions and, indeed, for the line which he has been taking throughout the tragic period since Thursday night. I agree that the investigation policy that I have announced should cover the whole question of the protection of buildings and also the procedures, such as patrolling, which, as he knows, takes place around the perimeter of a police station when it is within the range of a mortar bomb. I agree with his points and also that financial restraints should not play a part in the consideration of these matters. There is just one point which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will corroborate from his local knowledge. It is that when a police station is in the centre of a town, as it is in Newry — all hon. Members will agree that the town centre is a desirable place for a police station—the task of making absolutely sure that it is protected against such assaults becomes extremely difficult.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I join right hon. and hon. Members in condemning the merciless butchery and the cold-blooded murder of eight gallant RUC men, two RUC women and one gallant member of the UDR. I express my deepest sympathy, and trust that those whose homes and hearts have been broken will know that there are many good people in Ulster who support them, even in prayer. Is the Secretary of State aware that two of those gallant members were from my constituency? Mrs. Ivy Kelly was an honourable young policewoman who served her company with distinction. Mr. Trevor Harkness was a gallant young UDR member with five young children. He had the same size of family as I have. His eldest child is nine and the youngest only two. Yesterday I stood at the side of a grave when the rain was pouring down from the heavens and saw a young woman kneel beside the coffin and kiss it before it was laid in mother earth. To see that, even a heart of stone could turn into one of suffering.

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, after 16 long years of terror, Ulster people have the right to ask the Government when they intend to fulfil their promise to eradicate terrorism? Does the Secretary of State believe that any Government can eradicate guerrilla IRA murder activities without strong military measures? Will the Secretary of State explain why the surveillance at Newry was cut? Should a disused building not have been under constant surveillance as a potential launching pad for mortar bombs? In the name of all decent, law-abiding citizens in Northern Ireland, I call on the Secretary of State to embark on a relentless offensive against the provisional IRA and all terrorism until these are wholly eradicated. There will be voices of dissent, but does the Secretary of State not agree that all honourable citizens would thank God for such effective action against cruel, vicious, vile and degenerate murderers.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman speaks with emotion, and he has conveyed it effectively to the House. I felt something very similar when I looked at the remains of the portakabin in Newry on Friday afternoon. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the security forces have achieved substantial successes, not least in the last few weeks and months. I confirm that our aim is not to contain terrorism but to eradicate it. His point about patrolling now falls to be examined. I believe that the aim of eradicating terrorism can be achieved. It will require steadiness of purpose to grind down the sources of recruitment for the IRA as well as the sources of money and guns. It will require co-operation with the Government of the Republic. It will also require full-hearted co-operation from all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. Given that, the aim of eradication—which is the only aim that a responsible Government could propose to this House — can be achieved.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the people of Mourne, who are deeply, and in many cases personally, involved in the casualties of last Thursday, will learn with appreciation of the tribute paid by himself and the way in which it was received by the House? Is he further aware that the only rational hope of eventually seeing an end to a succession

of events such as these lies in the firm, public and consistent perseverence in the lines of policy laid down by the Prime Minister last November?

Mr. Hurd: The adjectives that the right hon. Gentleman has just used were well chosen. Success in security policy, as in our other efforts in Northern Ireland, will come through steady adherence to publicly proclaimed objectives. Provided we stick to that, I believe that we shall gradually make progress and finally achieve success.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is it not a strange confusion that from time to time the security forces should be reviled, even by some of the Catholic clergy, when they shoot dead armed terrorists engaged in murderous operations? Is there not some hope that these events will help to dispel that confusion?

Mr. Hurd: The security forces face not just the terrorists but a series of generalised criticisms — made sometimes in good faith, sometimes in bad, and sometimes even by those whom they are seeking to protect as well as by those whom they are seeking to destroy. They must wrestle with that just as we in Government must wrestle with it. I hope that one side effect of the tragedy at Newry and the others that I have mentioned will be to concentrate people's minds away from such unhelpful, inaccurate generalisations and towards the reality that faces everyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I assure the Secretary of State that the alliance parties join him in his expression of sympathy to the relatives and colleagues of those so cruelly struck down in the past few days. Has the time not come to join with the Republic to establish one co-ordinated security force to operate in the border areas? It was obvious from the right hon. Gentleman's statement that the lorry was stolen at Crossmaglen and that the people who carried out the shooting went towards the border. Has the time not also come to give greater protection to those brave men who are still serving in the police and prison services? We remember the senior prison officer who was so cruelly shot down outside Armagh cathedral only a fortnight ago. Is it not also time that we gave greater protection to people of the Roman Catholic faith?

Mr. Hurd: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the Chief Constable is always considering, naturally enough, how he can best protect the officers under his charge, whether they are on or off duty. It is a formidable task. The thought of providing protection for men as they go to and from mass is a formidable business, and few of us would want to be surrounded by that kind of protection when we were at worship. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman is right in that the problem remains and must be constantly reviewed.

As to his first point, we are all in favour of thickening the effectiveness of co-operation north and south of the border. Co-operation between the RUC and the Garda is good, but there are always ways in which it could be improved. That is one of our tasks.

Mr. Richard Needham (Wiltshire, North): Was not my right hon. Friend as shocked as I was to read press reports that following this ghastly attack there were several times — I am sorry, but coming from that part of the world and having been there many times, this event has left me with as much upset as any other hon. Member. Did not these press reports seem to show that there were examples of many people — I am sorry, but I cannot finish my question.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I strongly support the views expressed in all parts of the House, particularly the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), that too often in this country those who murder and kill in Ireland are somehow regarded as freedom fighters. They are not. I go further. All paramilitaries, whether Loyalists or Republicans, believe in murder as superior to the ballot box, and no-one from any part of the political spectrum who believes in democracy can give them even a modicum of support.

Some of the media reported on Friday that somehow these clever chaps in the provisional IRA had discovered new weapons, but to my knowledge this weapon was used five or six years ago. It is not a new weapon, and the IRA should not be written of as if somehow it has tapped great expertise in other parts of the world.

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall, as I do, that when some of my officials met the provisional IRA it said, "Get the troops out of Northern Ireland — not too quickly because we do not want a Lebanon." The troops are now practically out of Northern Ireland. There are very few British troops there. Those who talk of "troops out" do not know what has happened, but the provisional IRA has changed its tack. It now kills fellow Irishmen, whether Catholic or Protestant, and now that the police and those who work with them are bearing the brunt, we should support them.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. His remarks were extremely helpful. The point that he made at the beginning was just. I looked at the lorry with the mortar tubes still on it and I have gone carefully into its origins. The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right. This kind of equipment has been used nearly 20 times, with a remarkable lack of success up to this point. I deliberately mentioned in my statement where the different bombs had fallen. That shows that this was an entirely indiscriminate attack. Civilians not connected with the police but who lived in that built-up area might have been killed in large numbers from the same device. This is an old, indiscriminate weapon which on this occasion had the fortune—if that is the right description—to land on the portakabin. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman is right in saying that there is nothing new, subtle or clever about this device.

I think I got the gist of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) was saying. He was referring to press reports about attitudes in Newry. When I was in the town on Friday, my strong impression was that the people of both communities were deeply shocked and angered by what had happened. This is borne out by the reactions that the Royal Ulster Constabulary has received and by the torchlight vigil. I hope that that anger and shock will be translated into active co-operation to forestall anything similar taking place in the future.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): May I join the Secretary of State in expressing my sympathy for those members of the security forces who have been killed during the last fortnight? I had the sad task of visiting several of their homes over the weekend. Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity again to

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

clarify the situation in relation to the charge of sectarianism that was made against the Ulster Defence Regiment? Will he tell the House how Roman Catholics have been forced out of the regiment during the past few years just as, over the last fortnight, six Roman Catholics have been killed by the IRA because they were members of the RUC or of the prison service? Will he also accept that, second only to their desire to see a complete end to violence, my constituents want no retaliatory action to be taken against their Roman Catholic neighbours? Finally, will the Secretary of State please grasp the nettle that so far has not been grasped by any Secretary of State and proscribe Sinn Fein, which is the public face of the IRA?

Mr. Hurd: We have often discussed the hon. Gentleman's last suggestion. It is not a matter upon which the mind of the Government should be closed. However, examination of this matter both by my predecessor and by me has led to the conclusion such action would not help the security situation and that it might, indeed, create problems for the Royal Ulster Constabulary in enforcing the new ban that would be substantially greater than the RUC faces at the moment. I share the hon. Gentleman's feelings both about the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment and also about what may be emerging as a deliberate attempt by the terrorists to single out Catholic members of the security forces. It is a strength of the security forces, particularly the RUC, not so much of the UDR, that they are able to recruit in both communities. It is very important that that strength should be maintained. It may be that the terrorists are deliberately aiming at Catholic members of the prison service and the RUC. That, I believe is a sufficient commentary upon their objectives and methods. I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about retaliatory acts by members of the majority community. That would set us on a well-established road to ruin. I am sure that the whole House would join the hon. Gentleman in deploring any such prospect.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): In seeking to combat terrorism in Northern Ireland, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that a significant proportion of all those who have been convicted of scheduled offences go on, after release, to commit further terrorist offences? Has not the time come, therefore, for a new sentence to be introduced of imprisonment for the duration of the emergency, in addition to the imprisonment that is dealt with at that time, so that such terrorists are not released so long as terrorism continues in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: An important principle which we have tried to follow in recent years is that those who commit murder are murderers and that no special procedure or penalty should be attached to them because they claim that they were acting on a political basis. Once one opens up the distinction between different kinds of murder there are consequences for many other matters — for status in prison, for extradition, and so on. Although we should all the time be examining ways of making sure that terrorists do not return to their old ways when released from prison, I am not at first sight attracted by my hon. Friend's specific proposal.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to point out to hon. Members that a war between Protestants and Roman Catholics is no taking place in Northern Ireland, that such a war has neve taken place but that a war is being waged upon the entir community by those who are determined to destroy th democratic process there? Will he share my hope, as attended this morning the funeral of a Roman Catholi policeman, who was a constituent, in Carrickfergus an whose fiancée was a Protestant, that the grief shared b Protestant and Roman Catholic families ought to unify a right-thinking people in demonstrating clearly the support for the security forces? Will he further appeal t those who hold responsible positions in radio, televisio and the press that they should cease to interview thos volunteer liars who attack our security forces and wh attempt to defend the indefensible acts perpetrated b terrorists?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's opening remark were particularly well chosen. I agree with the main thru of his question, namely, that the shock that he has sense in his constituency in both Catholics and Protestants alik about what has happened needs, before it evaporates, t be transformed into an active determination to work wit the security forces who rely upon information and upon a kinds of co-operation if they are effectively to do their jo of protecting the community.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) Does the Secretary of State accept that when he speaks as he spoke today, with calm, measured determinatio about the Government's commitment to rooting ou terrorists with the full co-operation of the community i the Province, he speaks not for the Government alone bu for the people of this country, and that he enjoys the fu support of all hon. Members? Will he also say that in th review of the terrible events of which he spoke he wi thoroughly investigate the reports that have subsequentl appeared that the lorry from which the shots were fire appeared easily to penetrate the proximity of the polic station at Newry? The report appeared yesterday in among other newspapers, *The Observer*.

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. I am grateful to the hon Gentleman. When a police station is in the centre, as thi one is, of a quite well populated town, and mortars ar fired within a range of 200 or 300 metres, there are boun to be quite a number of places where a lorry can pause fo four or five minutes, which is all that is required, withou attracting particular concern. However intensive th patrolling may be, there is always that risk. It is better tha the House should be clear about that point. Subject to tha proviso, the hon. Gentleman is right. This is one of th matters that falls to be examined.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Since th first requirement of security is to provide adequat protection to the police and security forces, will my righ hon. Friend consider extending the capital programme tha he has announced today, which is very welcome, not onl to police stations in exposed areas but to the homes o police officers who are resident in those dangerous places If he were able to do that, my right hon. Friend woul certainly win a great deal of support from the men an women who are daily exposed to the risk of being terribl murdered.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he wil readily agree, there are problems about that, but th

physical security of our officers in their private homes needs to be considered. On my hon. Friend's first point about police buildings, I point out that a suggestion has been made in the press that the police might be safer in conventional buildings rather than in portakabins. We need to think carefully about that matter. Powerful mortar shells such as these do fearful damage wherever they fall. In the case of conventional buildings, there is the additional problem of people being trapped by falling masonry.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not the case that the Provisional IRA, which glories in these horrifying murders, is most anxious that no political progress should be made between Dublin and the British Government? Therefore, is it not all the more urgent that both the British and Irish Governments should try to reach agreement, look again at the proposals in the Forum report, and, at the end of the day, produce a political solution for Northern Ireland which will be acceptable and fair to both communities there?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my predecessor and I have made clear our views on the specific options of the Forum. A solid co-operative working relationship between the Republic of Ireland and ourselves is very much in the interests of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does not the murder of the RUC officer in front of his wife and teenage daughters show the kind of barbarism that one is up against? Does that not mean that those responsible must be sheltered not just by one but by a people? If one takes the lesson of the second world war one sees that where partisans were supported by local people they survived and where they were informed upon and betrayed by local people they were wiped out. Does it not follow that we should not be calling for more troops or police in Northern Ireland because, however many troops or police there are, the will, wish and cover of local people cannot be overcome? Surely the answer lies in more people not telling us that they are shocked or how awful something is, but doing something about it? The answer to the problem is as much in their hands as it is in those of the police or the armed forces.

Mr. Hurd: The discussion that we have had in the House has been remarkably realistic in tone and it has turned specifically on my hon. Friend's point—the need for all those whom the security forces protect to give them full-hearted co-operation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of the most recent threats to sports gatherings and venues in Ulster, what additional security measures will be introduced and what undertakings on security can the right hon. Gentleman give?

Mr. Hurd: Obviously, the RUC pays particular attention to sporting occasions. It has to. But I hope and expect that sporting organisations in the United Kingdom and throughout the world will treat that particular piece of bravado with the contempt that it deserves.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Will my right hon. Friend today request the Leader of the Opposition formally to dissociate himself from the Republican wing of his party and, in particular, to stop convicted terrorists being invited into this building, which is not only an insult to the dead but encourages terrorists to think that one day they will achieve their aims through the Labour party?

Mr. Hurd: That is not a matter for me, but I hope that everyone with responsibility in these matters will realise the nature of Provisional Sinn Fein and its links.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Let me make it clear to the House, the Secretary of State and the Government, as has been made clear this afternoon by other Labour Members, that we abhor violence of any sort or description. We shall today, tomorrow and always.

Coal Industry Dispute

4.43 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I had rather assumed that the statement that we had today had subsumed the hon. Member's application under Standing Order No. 10. We had a long run on it and an important debate is to follow. I cannot stop the hon. Member from making his application, but it would be an abuse of our procedures.

Mr. Nellist: I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing an urgent, specific and important matter that should take precedence over tomorrow's business, namely,

"the refusal of the National Coal Board to grant an amnesty to those miners sacked during the past 12 months of the strike."

The matter is urgent because, despite the decision of yesterday's delegate conference, we heard in the House one hour ago that already Scotland and the Kent areas of the NUM have refused to go back to work. No peace in the remaining areas will be seen until justice is granted for the 728 miners so far sacked out of nearly 10,000 arrests made in the past 12 months.

The matter is specific because the House must deal with the double standards of the NCB which has sacked striking miners, often for offences such as the theft of £4-worth of slag coal, processing those miners through the supermarket courts, while welcoming with open arms convicted miners who were prepared to return to work. Charges of blackmail have been levelled against the Government, the NCB and the police, and the House should debate the several occasions when those bodies have agreed to drop charges if miners were prepared to break the strike. Convicted miners have served their sentences and are now to be doubly punished.

We also need a debate about those miners who have been found innocent. I raised the case of Clive Ham in the Chamber when it first arose. That concerned a miner in Coventry who, along with his 18-month-old son, was arrested and put in a police cell. He was charged and arraigned before a court, and between those two procedures he was sacked. The court found him not guilty but the NCB has refused to withdraw the letter of dismissal.

Almost one hour ago exactly the Secretary of State for Energy said:

"acquittal is not a guarantee that someone has not committed an offence."

The Secretary of State is setting himself up as judge, jury and executioner—and that from a member of a party that calls itself the party of law and order.

Those miners are guilty only of fighting for union policy. If the Government seriously want a workable arrangement between the union and the NCB, which I seriously doubt, there should be a debate tomor allow the Government to announce a general an *[Interruption.]* I hope that the public school hooliga restrain themselves for 30 seconds.

I have been proud to work alongside the mi Coventry and Warwickshire during the past 12 mo feel nothing but respect for the miners, their wiv families, who have resisted everything tha Government have thrown at them and who have fou Government to a standstill. The 11 miners from t colliery in Coventry who have been sacked, four of were released from prison last Monday after convicted of an affray at their own house, hav sacked by the NCB in Coventry and Warwickshire called industrial misconduct. The cases of those n symptomatic of the 728 men dismissed nationally has happened during a period when no police offi been dismissed for his conduct during the strike.

The matter is urgent, specific and important double-dealing and the statement of the Secretary o one hour ago should be fully exposed in a debate House tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Coventry, East (Mr. Nellist) asks leave to move the Adjournm the House for the purpose of discussing a speci important matter that he believes should have consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the National Coal Board to grant an am those miners sacked during the past 12 months of the s

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gen has said. I do not consider that the matter that he has is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order N and, therefore, I cannot submit his application House.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I sh together the Questions on the three motions rela statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Weights and Measures (Solid Fuel) (C by Rail) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a S Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscel Diseases Benefit (Amendment) Scheme 1985 be referr Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Social Security (Contributions, Re Consequential Amendment Regulations 1985 (S.I., 198 143), be referred to a Standing Committee on St Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Government's Public Expenditu to 1987-88, in relation to the Scotland Programme, b matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the S Grand Committee.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Public Expenditure

4.49 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Rees): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd. 9428).

Mr. Speaker: I should announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

In view of the late start of the debate, I shall have to apply the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 8.50 pm. If hon. Members make relatively brief speeches, it may be possible to relax that limit.

Mr. Rees: This is only the second occasion on which I have had the privilege to commend to the House the annual public expenditure White Paper, but that brief experience has taught me that only an incurable optimist would expect this annual document to be received with rapturous acclaim. Therefore, I approach my task with, I hope, suitable diffidence.

As has become customary, the House has the benefit of a detailed report on the White Paper from the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), the Chairman of the Select Committee, in his place and I hope that we shall have a notable contribution from him. I am sure that the House will, once again, find the Select Committee's report a valuable contribution to our debate.

The Select Committee made a number of criticisms, with which I shall attempt to deal during my speech, but it has been good enough to acknowledge a number of changes and improvements introduced in this year's White Paper. I should emphasise that many of those changes were made in response to the Committee's recommendations last year. Our aim has been to improve the intelligibility and clarity of the document. I shall certainly not claim that we have reached perfection, but I hope that we have made certain advances.

On the policy background to the expenditure plans set out in the White Paper, our aim, which has been consistently followed since 1979, is prudent financial policies, a sustainable level of public expenditure and a reduction in the level of public borrowing.

I look forward to hearing the contributions of hon. Members, and particularly that of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), because I waited in vain during our debate on the autumn statement for a statement from him on what level of expenditure he would plan for and how he would finance it. I also understand that the country has been privileged to hear the advance Budget of the alliance, and I hope that the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) will elaborate on those proposals.

The Government have demonstrated their willingness to face the implications of a rigourous public expenditure target. The White Paper also demonstrates the commitment that we have shown, and will continue to show, to certain sensitive areas of public spending. The social security programme has been more than maintained and, with increased take-up and demographic changes, is expected to increase. The health and social services programme will be broadly maintained in real terms, and the job creation schemes of the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Employment are being maintained.

However, we have also been prepared to identify the areas of spending, such as the provision of subsidies to industry and agriculture, which should be pruned back, and the expenditure on public sector housing——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend making a new announcement about the subsidies given to agriculture? Can we expect him to apply to farmers the same harsh logic that has been applied to the miners?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rees: The interesting analogy that my hon. Friend draws has received enthusiastic applause from the Opposition. It would divert me from my main theme if I were to make the various points of distinction which can be observed from the Government Benches. I have to disappoint my hon. Friend. The decisions have been announced by my right hon. Friends responsible for the Departments involved. The conclusions are drawn together in the White Paper and I am sure that if my hon. Friend is called to speak he will be able to amplify his imaginative proposals for economies in these areas.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Rees: I appreciate the keen concern that my hon. Friend shows in these matters, but perhaps he will allow me to get a little deeper into the debate. I shall then give way to him.

Following the rapid growth in spending on defence up to 1985-86—an increase in real terms of, on average, 3 per cent. per annum, which is in line with our NATO commitment—we are planning to consolidate in later years.

I make no secret of the fact that important factors in our plans are the targets set for the nationalised industries. Their plans for total external finance show a fall from £3·21 billion in 1984-85 to minus £110 million in 1987-88. It has been suggested that that shows a measure of optimism verging on unreality and that such targets could be achieved only by insensitive and insupportable price increases.

That opens up a debate about the role that we see for our nationalised industries and reopens the debate on what return we expect on the enormous investment of public money that has been made over the years. After all, even in the private sector, the investor expects a return.

I take my stand on the White Paper produced in 1978 when the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was Minister for Prices and Consumer Protection and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was Secretary of State for Energy. That White Paper suggested as the norm a real return of 5 per cent. on the investment programmes of nationalised industries. That seems a practical and sensible contribution to our thinking on this matter, and I hope that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will confirm that that view is still the policy of the Labour party.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service last year, the Chief Secretary refused to address himself to the

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

effect of the miners' strike on external financing limits. Is this not the opportunity for him to make a full statement about the effects of the strike this year and during the coming financial year? Surely the historian has a right to know what that strike cost the nation. Will the Chief Secretary make that statement and let the country know?

Mr. Rees: I am coming, as far as I can, to the consequences of the miners' strike. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield said that history would be written sooner than we care for, but we are still rather in the middle of things. I am flattered that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should think that within 24 hours of the conclusion of the delegates' conference we could see through and evaluate all the consequences of that great industrial turmoil.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will we get the figures in the end?

Mr. Rees: I am coming to that point. The hon. Gentleman may not be fully satisfied today, but we will do our best to satisfy him over the coming weeks, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will do his best to satisfy the hon. Gentleman in about two weeks' time.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rees: No. If I had known that the hon. Gentleman was about to intervene I would have given way to him, because he pressed me on this matter in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee last year. If he will allow me to continue, I shall do my best to give way to him later if he is still dissatisfied. I wish to move on from this emotive subject.

Our critics seem to take scant account of the savings which increased efficiency could generate in nationalised industries. Savings of between 3 and 5 per cent. per annum are commonplace in the private sector. Is it too much to expect the same in the public sector?

On the question of prices—ultimately it is for the boards of nationalised industries to set prices consistent with their targets—we have the statement of Sir Denis Rooke that the British Gas Corporation can achieve its targets by prices level with, if not slightly lower than, the rate of inflation. Similar statements have been made by the chairmen of the electricity supply industries.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): What about the water industry?

Mr. Rees: I am coming to that.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): May I help my right hon. and learned Friend?

Mr. Rees: I am always grateful for assistance from my hon. Friend. I noticed his slightly highly charged statements at the press conference after the publication of the important report by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service.

In response to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), I should add that I was just coming to the question of water. One exception will, of course, be the water industry, but those who press for increased investment in the infrastructure, and particularly in what they describe—with a degree of universality which is not quite justified and which would not be seen as I believe, by Mr. Roy Watts—as collapsing sewe leaking water mains, cannot in the same breath cor if the water authorities' targets envisage an increase per cent. in their capital programmes to be fund increased prices. I can understand that the right Member for Sparkbrook may feel a moment of when he addresses himself to such matters, particul he was once Secretary of State for Prices and Con Protection. He will recall that between May 1979 a end of 1984 electricity prices to the consume example, rose by 16 per cent. in real terms, but tha rose by 27 per cent. under the previous L Government.

I turn to the question of capital spending infrastructure.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am aggrieved that my hon. and learned Friend should have thought I m slightly charged statement at the press conference. only meant to be helpful to the consumer. My righ and learned Friend has set himself the target of rec £3 billion of external financing limits to a positive million over a very short period. Last time that targ set, there was an utter failure to reach it. Without milch cows of water, gas and electricity paying mor the rate of inflation, how can the figures come right? my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the m of accountancy adopted to arrive at the figures soug been called the accountancy of Bedlam by res members of the accountancy profession? How can right to use that system of accountancy to arrive a figures when everybody, with the exception o Minister's advisers, considers it daft?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend has taken the stateme members of the accountancy profession when they uttered in a slightly different context.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I spoke to them.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend may well be for enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speake those statements were made when the accoun profession was considering a change in metho accounting, although not particularly in relation nationalised industries. If my hon. Friend wants to demonstrate that Sir Denis Rooke and the chairman electricity industry are wrong, we shall pay the c attention to his speech.

My hon. Friend said that the targets had not achieved, and of course it is true that the C Electricity Generating Board, British Rail and the Na Coal Board have been affected by the industrial act the past 12 months. My hon. Friend is apparently s that we will face a similar cataclysmic occurrence o the next 12 months, and I agree that if that happen would have to reconsider our public expenditure However, I am not quite such a pessimist as he clea

I turn again to the question of capital spending a infrastructure. As *The Times* perceptively remarke Friday, "infrastructure" has become the political word of the 1980s. I suspect that many of the contrib to the debate generated on this subject are more of a veiled plea for more public expenditure than a c analysis of what the infrastructure requires. I was pressed by the Select Committee on whether we

have a comprehensive review, or a sort of Doomsday survey, setting out the value of all public expenditure assets and the proper rate of appreciation. But if the House reflects for a moment it will recognise that public expenditure assets cover a wide and heterogeneous area which includes the Tower of London and the Treasury building, and will recognise some of the practical difficulties involved in such an exercise.

The truth is that there is no absolutely correct aggregate level of capital spending, that each project must be assessed on its merits — as it is — and that the total investment in the economy, running at £55 billion this year, has never been higher, and is still rising.

The debate on the level of infrastructure spending highlights the importance of assessing the outputs obtained from public spending. I hope that in this debate we can move away from the crude assessment of a Government's or a Department's performance in any public activity by the amount of a cash thrown at an objective. As a distinguished 19th century legislator observed some years ago:

"Large increases in costs with questionable increases in performance can only be tolerated for racehorses and fancy women."

So far as I am aware, I have no ministerial responsibility for either of those interesting areas of human endeavour.

The Government are firmly committed to planning the inputs to public expenditure in cash terms. What we spend must be determined by what cash resources are available. Where volume is important is in relation to public spending outputs. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee, if I may say so, is absolutely right to draw attention to this issue. Increasingly, all those involved in the planning and control of public spending must first clearly define their aims and objectives—what they are trying to achieve—and then focus on how effectively and efficiently scarce resources are being used to meet those targets.

For example, much more is being achieved by the National Health Service. In 1983, 9,000 more inpatients a day were treated than in 1978. That is set out in the White Paper. The output of first-degree graduates has risen from 81,000 in 1979 to an estimated 101,000 in 1984-85, including a more than proportionate rise in science graduates. I hope that my old university, Oxford, took full account of those figures in its recent debates. Administrative efficiency is improving and there have been, for example, lower unit costs in social security administration. That is set out in a table in volume II of the White Paper. Those are just a few specific examples of what has been achieved, and they represent an indication of the general trend that must continue.

Most of these examples are drawn from central Government. Local government in general — and of course there are shining exceptions — has been less successful in getting value for money. Expenditure has risen by nearly 10 per cent. in cost terms since 1979, largely because of excessive pay settlements. Manpower has fallen by only 4 per cent., compared with 14 per cent. in the Civil Service.

Critics of the White Paper have pointed out that public spending has continued to rise in real terms since 1979 —particularly if one makes a number of adjustments to the public expenditure planning total figures which some people favour. We can have an interesting if somewhat technical debate about the figures which should, or should not, appear in the planning total. However, I suspect that at the end of the day this debate is more about presentation than substance, particularly if, as I said in my evidence to the Select Committee, the figures are presented clearly and consistently, as I hope they are in both volumes of the White Paper.

I would be the first to concede the continuing difficulties of containing public expenditure. However, I derive some comfort from the fact that although over a 20-year period public expenditure has risen by 3 per cent. per annum on average, it has risen by only 1·5 per cent. since 1979. I also readily acknowledge that there are substantial uncertainties in some areas, particularly bearing in mind that the White Paper figures were finalised in December. Life does move on. The coal strike and its aftermath are the most conspicuous example, and of course I was much pressed on that when giving evidence to the Select Committee.

The White Paper explicitly draws attention to the need to review the position at the end of the strike, and that we are doing. Costs are certain to be higher than those assumed in the White Paper, which had to be based on the assumption of a conclusion at the end of 1984. In two weeks' time my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will present his Budget proposals to the House. As I made clear when giving evidence to the Select Committee, he will seek to provide an updated assessment of the cost of the stike.

Mr. Fisher: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that, in evidence to the Select Committee, his Treasury officials agreed that they had the figures but that they were not allowed to publish them? Will he explain why, if he had the figures, he did not publish them, and why he does not publish them now?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Member misrepresents the position. We gave figures before Christmas on the basis of an end to the strike at the end of the year. We could have made tentative estimates of what the costs were likely to be, but it would not have assisted the debate if we had given tentative figures at fortnightly intervals. Now that the strike is over, we cannot accurately predict the consequences. Mr. Scargill has talked about guerrilla activities. We do not know how long it will take to shore up some of the faces and to pump out the pits. We do not know how long it will be necessary for the CEGB to continue with oilburn. These matters will have to be determined coolly, and in due time we shall give the House a proper estimate of the costs. The most up-to-date figures will be given at Budget time in two weeks.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): When assessing the cost of the miners' strike, I assume that the Treasury will work out how much has been lost in income tax. Will my right hon. and learned Friend be able to tell the House whether Mr. Scargill and Mr. Heathfield have taken their salaries for the last year? Since they are paid on a yearly basis, they could take their salaries in full between now and 4 April. May we be told whether they do that?

Mr. Rees: That is an interesting question, but whether they take their salaries is a matter for them and their union. I would not be permitted to see their tax files even if I were curious about their tax affairs.

As part of the normal preparation for the run-up to the Budget and the associated updating of the medium-term

[Mr. Rees]

financial strategy, it is necessary to review the prospects for expenditure as well as for revenue and borrowing. This year the review will have to take into account a considerable range of uncertainties, with the developments over the past two or three months. We shall need to review the White Paper figures against that background. I am sure that the House would not expect me today to try to anticipate what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have to say on 19 March.

Another area of uncertainty which the Select Committee identified is local authority expenditure. I make no complaint of its concentrating on that. Local authority expenditure is an integral part of total public expenditure. It accounts for about £38 billion out of a planning total of £130 billion. More than a quarter of total public spending is by local authorities. The Government cannot, in a unitary state, be indifferent to what is spent. If central Government think that local expenditure is threatening national objectives, they are bound to act.

As the Select Committee observed in paragraph 36 of its report, we have had to revise our estimates of local authority expenditure for the current year, 1984-85, upwards by about £2 billion. A total of £1·2 billion is on account of current expenditure, and £700 million on account of capital expenditure. That is why we have had to tighten current spending.

Councils which exceed their targets will in future face a more severe holdback of grant. That is why we have had to introduce rate capping. To put the problem in perspective, the 18 authorities which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has designated for rate capping last year accounted for 75 per cent. of total overspend. Profligacy of that order affects not only domestic ratepayers, but commercial and industrial ratepayers. It affects jobs.

That is also why we have had to tighten up on the existing system of control of local authority capital expenditure. Where there was an underspend in previous years, as there was in 1981-82 and in 1982-83, we rightly encouraged spending up to the control figure. In 1983-84 there was an overspend of about £400 million, and in the current year, as the Select Committee observed, there is likely to be an overspend of between £600 million and £700 million.

The tightening of existing controls — I emphasise again that there has been a system of control on this basis since the 1980 Act, and we shall debate the orders next week — is designed simply to ensure that the gross capital spending figure of £5 billion, which is no small figure, will not be overspent as it was in preceding years.

As my right hon. and hon. Friends have emphasised, this system of control does not deprive local authorities of moneys raised from the sale of assets. It is, and always has been, designed to regulate the rate at which capital expenditure is incurred by reference to current and past receipts. Again, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have emphasised, there is an overhang of £5 billion of accumulated receipts. That does not mean, however, that local authorities in the aggregate have £5 billion of accumulated cash or liquid assets.

With respect to those of my hon. Friends who have put their names to early-day motion 283, the Government do not and could not share the relaxed view that they appear to take about the macro-economic impact of uncontrolled capital expenditure on anything scale.

Without the tightening of the present system controls which we are proposing there would be a substantial increase in local authority expenditu the amounts for which we have planned and al emphasise that a potential overspend runn hundreds of millions of pounds could not fail t major impact on the Chancellor's budgetary pol

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I apolo interrupting. I fully understand my right hon. and Friend's arguments, and I support him, but I am why local authorities in Scotland are being all spend all their receipts from local authority hou why there is no control of rate spend.

Mr. Rees: I am sure that my hon. Friend has close study of these matters. The position nort border is slightly different. Local authorities are to spend only their in-year receipts. A differen system operates in a different fashion. In Scotla is no problem about the overhang of accumulated

It would have been naive to expect the Opposition to approve of the White Paper, b amendment hardly sets out a factual basis f disapproval. The basis of almost every point t single out is plainly wrong. They single out un ment. They appear to overlook the fact that in months to last September employment increased b 500,000. They single out investment, but investment increased by 12 per cent. in 1984 to all-time high.

In their amendment the Opposition point to da industry, but the gross domestic product is at its ever level and has increased every year for the p years. They refer to housing, but private completions last year were the highest for nearly 1 They glanced at the infrastructure, but total inves currently at record heights.

The amendment talks of increased fuel prices, and electricity prices are not expected to rise in rea as the chairmen have made clear. The Opposition an attack on the living standards of the unemploy sick, the disabled and the poor, but all the mai security benefits are higher in real terms than the when this Government took office.

All this is cheap rhetoric, more appropriate to a party conference than to a serious debate on expenditure. I hope that the right hon. Mem Sparkbrook will throw away his prepared speech an the thoughtful contribution of which we know he capable.

It is no secret that the business of controlling expenditure has been, is, and will remain an ardu thankless task. Looking back, I remind the House Lloyd George said in a Budget debate. He said:

"The path of the economist"—

he was using the term broadly, and I would not c be an economist—

"is hard. His is not a very attractive or popular role Government."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1909, Vol. 501.]

I sometimes think that in considering the pr thrown up we pay insufficient attention to the which similar problems are faced abroad. I comme

example, to the official Opposition the lessons to be learnt from the stern measures taken in France and Spain by parties which they regard, no doubt, as on the same side of the political spectrum as themselves.

To the House as a whole, I commend the current debate in Washington. The United States is, after all, the single most powerful economic unit in the world. We are sometimes encouraged by hon. Members on both sides of the House to follow the American example and take a more relaxed view of the public deficit. I refer them to some wise words of Mr. Paul Volcker. In his evidence to the Joint Economic Committee of Congress on 5 February he said:

"The answer most fundamentally is that economic analysis and common sense coincide in telling us that budgetary and trade deficits of the magnitude we are running, at a time of growing prosperity, are simply unsustainable indefinitely . . . The hard fact is that the budget deficit, on top of the private investment needed to support growth and productivity, outruns our internal savings potential . . . In that real sense we are living beyond our means . . . The resulting imbalances and financial strains generate political pressures here and abroad for counter-productive protectionism, for economic nationalism and for excessive money creation that would, if implemented, undercut and jeopardise all the progress we have made."

The aim and object of Her Majesty's Government is based not on monetary dogmatism—if it were, I confess that I should not qualify as a prize pupil of Professor Friedman — but on economic analysis and common sense. To use Paul Volcker's words, we should live within our means so as not to set up political and economic strains which experience under Administrations of both colours shows we cannot support. We do not propose to undercut or jeopardise the progress that we have made.

The White Paper that I have presented to the House is a blueprint for living within our means in the next three years. On that basis, I commend it to the House.

5.22 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

"but deplores the fact that the Government's Expenditure Plans compound their errors of previous years and will further worsen unemployment, inhibit investment, inflict additional damage on industry, further exacerbate the severe shortage of adequate housing in many parts of the country, prevent necessary improvements in public services and in the economic and social infrastructure, increase fuel and water prices, and make further attacks on the living standards of the people in this country, particularly the unemployed, the sick and disabled, pensioners and families living in poverty."

Predictably, the Chief Secretary advanced to the House, in a slightly more oblique way, the assertion that he made so boldly at the press conference with which he launched the White Paper — that the Government's spending plans are on course and that the achievement of those plans and adherence to them is the certain way to achieve economic growth.

Anyone who has looked at the plans will know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was wrong in both particulars. The Government's spending forecasts have been wrong in four out of the past five years. Indeed, as the Select Committee, to which I pay tribute, points out, the Government have been driven into boasting not that their forecasts have proved correct but that they have stuck to their forecasts right up to the moment when they were proved wrong.

However, much more disastrous than the errors in forecasting, which are simply a matter of incompetence, are the Government's concepts on which the White Paper strategy is based. The White Paper's strategy, like t wider economic strategy of which it is a part, fundamentally wrong.

The White Paper should contribute to the plan for jo — the strategy for greater employment — whereas contributes directly, and I believe intentionally, to t creation of additional unemployment. It cuts capit spending and local authority spending, and it cuts Civ Service numbers. Each of those reductions will result a loss of jobs.

Last year's White Paper sacrificed, it is estimate 175,000 jobs. This year, according to the constructio industry alone, the consequences of the White Paper wi be a 60,000 reduction in jobs in building. The loc authorities calculate that the reductions in teacher numbers, which the White Paper will require if i forecasts are to be turned into reality, will add anoth 40,000 redundancies to the total.

The White Paper is part of the strategy which ha increased unemployment in Britain by 2 million in the la five years, with a total cost to the Exchequer of £12 billio The total cost to the Exchequer of the increase i unemployment in the last five years now amounts to ou annual revenues from North sea oil. Of that annual sum £4 billion is directly within the White Paper, not as a los of income to the Treasury through the denial of income ta which would have been paid by men and women at work but £4 billion a year that must additionally be paid to mee the growing unemployment bill.

While the Government prefer to invest in unemploy ment rather than in jobs, not only will the economy declin but — this may be less important in general, but it i specific to the debate — the Government's publi expenditure forecasts will constantly be wrong, for th combination of prejudice and ignorance which now passe as economic policy is bound to result in sudden cuts i public expenditure which, by generating more unemploy ment and decreasing overall economic activity, wil impose additional burdens on the public expenditur budget.

The most eloquent example of that is to be found in th coal dispute, which I hope ended today. That dispute, o an honest calculation, has already cost the country £3·5 billion. The Government spent that money to ensure tha they had the freedom to destroy jobs in the coal mining industry—*[Interruption.]* I see the Chancellor smiling i his normal smug fashion, no doubt saying that he stil believes that the £3·5 billion that the dispute has cost is a good investment for the nation.

If we can afford £3·5 billion this year to fight the miners, why can we not afford £3·5 billion next to fight unemployment? The answer — though I do not expect the Minister of State will give it — is that fighting unemployment is not one of the Government's priorities.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that his policy would have been to give in to the violent demands of Arthur Scargill? If so, how many billions of pounds does he think it would have cost to solve the double level of unemployment that would have resulted?

Mr. Hattersley: I give the hon. Gentleman three immediate answers. Had we applied—as we would have done had we been the Government—proper procedures over pit closures, there would have been no Cortonwood

[Mr. Hattersley]

and no dispute—*[Interruption.]* Secondly, had we come to office in the middle of the dispute, we would have sought to end it rather than, as the Prime Minister has done, prolong it. Thirdly, whatever is the cost of keeping uneconomic pits open, it is nothing remotely like £3·5 billion in a full year, and nobody can begin to pretend otherwise.

The miners' strike demonstrates that the Government's ill-considered attempts to cut expenditure have managed only to cut desirable expenditure and promote, in its place, undesirable expenditure, year by year. As a result, despite the boasts and promises——

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: The boasts and promises——

Mr. Eggar: Will the right hon. Gentleman please give way?

Mr. Hattersley: It is no good the hon. Gentleman pleading with me. Winsome though he is, I propose to finish the sentence. I do not want to under-estimate the hon. Gentleman's winsome characteristics.

Despite the boasts and promises that the Government have made at successive general elections, public expenditure has risen in real terms by 9·4 per cent. since they came to power. If asset sales are excluded, the rise is 12·6 per cent. In 1979, when the Conservative party formed a Government, public expenditure accounted for 39·5 per cent. of national income. It is now 42·5 per cent. The Government's ambition is to reduce the level of public expenditure by 1987-88 to that which they inherited five years ago. The Government have managed to contrive simultaneously to increase the level of public expenditure and to reduce the level of public services. This is an act of economic ingenuity which was thought to be impossible before the Government's election.

Mr. Eggar: When I tried to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman earlier he was saying that the Government had differentiated between desirable and undesirable expenditure. I understand that expenditure on current items has increased, especially on social security.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): That is because of unemployment.

Mr. Eggar: No. If unemployment-related social security benefit expenditure is excluded, social security expenditure has increased. Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that that is undesirable social expenditure?

Mr. Hattersley: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman came in late or was day-dreaming two or three minutes ago. The point that I made is one that he has made inadequately and incompetently. The desirable expenditure that the Government have reduced is, for example, investment in construction generally and housing especially. As a result of that undesirable cut, the undesirable expenditure that is incurred is the unemployment bill that is made necessary by extra building workers being put on the dole. It cannot be repeated often enough that the extra unemployment bill, which arises because of 2 million additions to the unemployment total, created by the Government, is about £4 billion.

Mr. Eggar: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that very point?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Eggar: Come on.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong once and I am not giving way to him again. I shall continue repeating, and so will the Opposition, that by their decision to cut projects which would have generated jobs, the Government automatically create for themselves other expenditures. That is why they have produced public expenditure forecasts in four years out of five which have borne little reality to the outturn one, two, three or four years afterwards.

The additional problem which the House must understand — I wish that the Chancellor of the Exchequer understood it — is that setting targets, insisting that reductions in public expenditure are essential to the economic well-being of the nation and then consistently failing to meet the targets which the right hon. Gentleman has described as essential, is doing appalling damage to international confidence in Britain. We should not be surprised that there is speculation against sterling when the Chancellor constantly fails to achieve what he describes as being economically essential. The Prime Minister constantly denigrates the structure and organisation of the British economy. The combination of a Prime Minister who sells Britain short and a Chancellor who falls over his own feet——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The right hon. Gentleman cannot see them.

Mr. Hattersley —is lethal to international confidence.

Despite the obvious errors of the past, the Chief Secretary made a categoric promise at the press conference at which the White Paper was launched that the Government would continue pursuing their strategy "constant and unchanged". I fear that he was right to make that promise, but I shall recall what the strategy has produced. This is the strategy which the right hon. and learned Gentleman reassures us is to be continued. The strategy, which is to continue unchanged, has produced the highest level of unemployment in Britain, the highest real interest rates, the highest tax rates, the highest rate of sterling depreciation in our history, the highest deficit in manufactured trade and the highest number of liquidations in our history. The comforting message that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gives us in the light of all that is, "Do not worry. Nothing will change." The Gadarene swine reassure themselves that they are running to the cliff in an absolutely straight line. That may be of some consolation to the Chief Secretary, but not to others.

The errors in the Government's public expenditure calculations are based on a self-perpetuating failure which destroys their forecasts the moment that they are made. First, the assumptions on which the forecasts are based are patently absurd. I told the right hon. and learned Gentleman last year that his forecast assumptions were implausible. I warned him then that the assumptions about local authority spending, public sector pay, unemployment and nationalised industry external financing could not be justified and would not be achieved. In the event, none of them were achieved.

The assumptions on which the White Paper is based will be proved wrong again. Indeed, the assumptions are

even more inaccurate this year than last. The inflation assumption for May, on which the upgrading of pensions and other benefits is to be based, is already overtaken, already wrong and already an under-estimate, although May is only about eight weeks away. The White Paper tells us that the upgrading will be based on an assumption of 4·75 per cent. inflation. We know already that that figure is to be exceeded. Next year's contingency reserve is already being reduced, two months before the financial year for which it has been provided.

I hope that when the Minister of State replies he will make clear what the inflation forecast now is for May and how much that already inflates the amount necessary for pension and benefit upgrading. I hope too, that he will make it clear that the new figure, which vitiates the White Paper forecast already, is to be properly honoured and that the rumours that we have heard and read about in newspapers—that the inflation updating may have to be abandoned because of the size of the error—are no more than rumours. What is more, I hope that the Minister who replies will tell us something about the real forecast for local authority spending. It was assumed last year that there would be a reduction of £1·9 billion, but there was not. There was to be a 13 per cent. cut, but that was not achieved. Indeed, local authority spending was substantially greater than that for the previous year, despite the 13 per cent. reduction which the Government estimated, forecast and predicted.

Local authority spending this year is said to be likely to fall by £1 billion. The councils have lost £12·4 billion in rate support grant since the Government came to power and they cannot make cuts next year of £1 billion. I believe that the Chief Secretary knows that. The local government spending forecast is either a negotiating posture to assist the Secretary of State for the Environment in his annual dispute with local authorities or it is a further episode in the campaign to erode local democracy and the power of the councils. In short, the forecast for local authority spending is intentionally too high and is intended to be broken. I hope that the Minister who replies to the debate will tell us what he really believes the increase or reduction in local authority expenditure is likely to be. If he persists in saying that he expects a reduction of the size specified in the White Paper, I hope that he will tell us why he believes that, in this year alone as distinct from all the other years when a forecast of that extent has been predicted, it can be achieved.

Thirdly, I hope that the Minister will explain his exact intentions with regard to public sector capital investment. This year, when virtually everyone in the country is demanding additional investment in the infrastructure, the Government propose a massive reduction in public sector capital spending. Between now and 1987-88, the Government propose to cut capital spending by £2·5 billion, or £4 billion if the figure for defence capital is removed from the total, as it should be. The figure for defence capital, which is not included in the statistics provided by our competitors in OECD, is inserted simply in order to make the cut in capital spending look more acceptable. The inclusion of that figure is clearly nonsense.

I should like to ask the Minister of State a specific question about the inclusion of defence capital. It was reported in *The Sunday Times* that in order to pad the figures and make the reduction in capital investment look less extreme, every possible item of defence capital has been included — even the cost of the Trident programme, most of which is to be discharged in the United States. Is that true? Perhaps the Chief Secretary, who carries such matters in his head, can tell me now whether the Government are so embarrassed about the capital cuts that they have had to pad the figures by including an item of capital expenditure that will not even be invested in this country. If the answer is yes, as I suspect it is, the capital cut is of nearly £4 billion. If the answer is no, the cut is still of well over £3 billion, and it is made at a time when there is, properly, a growing demand for increased investment in our decaying and dilapidated sewers, roads, housing stock, hospitals and railways, and all the other infrastructure items to which the report by the National Economic Development Council drew attention.

The report did not just point out the obvious need for investment in the infrastructure. It emphasised the fact that failure to invest now would result in further dilapidation and, in some cases, collapse, and that unless we spend some money now, future generations will have to spend much more. Investment in the infrastructure is financially prudent, economically necessary, and a certain way to create jobs. Nevertheless, the Government choose not to increase capital spending but to cut it dramatically.

Within the capital totals, the assault on the construction industry is barely comprehensible. The Government propose that spending on public sector housing should fall from £3 billion this year to £2·3 billion in 1987-88, despite the massive fall in public sector starts and completions, and in the number of public sector houses under construction, in the life of the present Government.

The Chief Secretary claimed today, as he always does, that our complaints about the loss of jobs that flows from cuts in capital spending in the public sector and in housing in particular are misconceived, because the gap is being filled by improvements and investments in, and extensions to, the private house building programme.

I hope that the chief Secretary is listening to me. For his benefit, I repeat what I have said. He constantly rebuts our claim that employment is being sacrificed by cuts in the public sector house building programme by saying that the cuts are being made up in the private sector. That argument is wholly unsustainable.

In 1978, the last full year of the Labour Government, there were 264,000 public and private starts. The figure has now fallen to 190,000. A reduction of 70,000 in the number of starts each year makes a massive difference to the number of men and women employed in the construction and ancillary industries. The claim that the gap is being filled by private enterprise must be the product of either ignorance or intentional deception. The assault on the house building programme is an assault on jobs.

That assault becomes even more unacceptable when local authorities have the money to build the houses. The local authorities have about £5 billion of capital that they were led to believe was theirs to invest in new projects and developments. After the autumn statement was made, I asked the Chief Secretary why he believed that the proceeds of the sale of council houses would automatically result in more investment in the public sector. The right hon. and learned Gentleman brushed aside the idea that there would not be such a result. The idea that it might be prohibited by the Government had clearly never struck him at the time. It should not have struck him or his colleagues since that time.

[Mr. Hattersley]

If the Chief Secretary wishes to contend that there has not been a wilful refusal to provide the investment that would have produced the jobs, he must give a much more convincing reason why local authorities who sold their houses, being encouraged in the belief that they could use the money for useful investment, should now be prevented from making such investment simply as part of the obeisance to the absurd doctrine of holding down the pubic sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Peter Hordern (Horsham): The right hon. Gentleman will recognise that in the latest housing survey the criticism of the nation's housing stock is that it is in poor condition and therefore needs much more repair and maintenance. How does he explain the fact that in the last year of the Labour Government only 70,000 grants were made to private owners to enable them to improve their houses, whereas last year 250,000 grants were made and far more money was spent?

Mr. Hattersley: I will say what the hon. Gentleman is longing for me to say—that last year the Government did far better than the Labour Government in their last year of office. However, the point that is relevant to the present debate is that next year and in the following year the Government's performance will be infinitely worse than in any one of the past 10 years. If the hon. Gentleman holds the beliefs that a brief look at his book suggests that he holds, he should be complaining about the cuts to be made in the Government grants next year and in the year after that. The Government are cutting those grants because of one of the basic fallacies underlying their economic policy, which is that economic redemption can be achieved through the constant contraction of the economy. That policy produces attempts to cut the PSBR by sudden and ill-conceived reductions in specific programmes.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way at the moment.

As the slump deepens, the amount required for unemployment benefit increases, tax revenues are lost, the oil revenues are dissipated, the pressure on the PSBR continues and the dreary round goes on and on.

The second fallacy underlying the Government's policy is the continued belief that somehow they can hold down inflation by increasing prices. This year's White Paper demonstrates the Government's wilful decision to push up the charges made by nationalised industries.

The Select Committee's comments on public sector prices are explicit. Referring to the Government's intention to use nationalised industry finance to affect public expenditure, the Select Committee concludes:

"If these targets are to be realised, it seems likely that the nationalised industries will resort to using their monopolistic power to raise prices".

It is extraordinary that, despite the slightly extravagant compliment that the Chief Secretary paid the Select Committee, he did not feel able to make a judgment on either of those two points. The truth of them is overwhelming and their force cannot be denied. The Government intend to enforce public sector prices increases above what the industries need and want to the point at which they will do something that is coyly described as providing £1·5 billion of negative borrowing. To many people, negative borrowing will sound like positive lending — positive lending enforced by the Government to use the nationalised industries as a surreptious means of raising taxes.

The nationalised industries, gas and electricity in particular, are likely to make what by normal commercial standards would be called a profit next year, which is to be creamed off and used for a tax. If, in the Budget in 14 days' time, the Chancellor decides to impose VAT on gas and electricity, he will be charging 15 per cent. tax on what is already in part another tax. He intends that those industries should contribute to the public sector borrowing requirement exactly like a tax. It is a tax, especially as applied to the water industry.

Although appearing superficially to deal with the water industry, the Chief Secretary failed wholly to deal with the point to which the Select Committee has drawn our attention and which has been underlined and repeated by the Confederation of British Industry. Knowing a little about the Chairman of the Select Committee, I suspect that he would regard it as more of a courtesy if the Government abandoned the extravagant compliments and dealt with the point that he is trying to make—in regard to the water industry, with considerable effect.

The Select Committee takes the water industry as its example of extravagant and unreasonable financial attitudes towards nationalised industry, for the simple reason that it is to be required to finance all future investment out of revenue. Why has the Chief Secretary not thought it necessary to justify that extraordinary decision? Why are he and I, and other middle-aged men like us, required from our water revenues to finance investment for next year and 20 years' time? The concept has only to be described to be understood to be ridiculous. The Select Committee and the CBI realise that it is ridiculous. The latter reported in its bulletin one month ago that water charges are set to rise by an average of 12 per cent. and in some areas will rise by 20 per cent. or more and concluded:

"at a time when local authorities are being urged to cut local rates, the authorities are being pressed to raise water rates in what is clearly a tax-gathering operation".

The CBI is opposed to it, the Select Committee drew our attention to it and the bold Chief Secretary cannot bring himself to say a word about it. I hope that, in that particular, the Minister of State will make up for the Chief Secretary's deficiencies.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could take himself back a couple of paragraphs to when he was saying that local government had £5 billion which could be spent on capital but which the Government would not let it spend in that way. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that local government will stick that money under the mattress, or is it possible that the money might be lent to financial institutions that would then on-lend the money for the creation of wealth and jobs in other sectors of the economy?

Mr. Hattersley: I should be glad if that happened but, if the money were lent to institutions, some of it would be exported for investment in other people's jobs in other countries. It is perhaps more certain that it would not have the same job creation force as if it were invested in construction. We know from all the studies and all the

surveys that investment in construction is the best and most certain way in which to create jobs. That is what the White Paper ought to be concerned with.

I should like the Minister of State to make up for some other deficiencies in the Chief Secretary's presentation by answering questions that to us seem central to the White Paper, but which, for some reason about which we can only speculate, the Chief Secretary did not think it right to comment on. Do the Government still support the view which was reported to them by the Central Policy Review Staff that for the Health Service to maintain its level of service, allowing for demographic change and medical advance, it must increase its spending by about 1 per cent. or 1·5 per cent. a year simply to stand still? If so, the Minister of State will confirm that a 2·1 per cent. increase, which has been much flaunted on Conservative platforms during the past month, will result in a deterioration in the service provided by the NHS. Will he confirm that even that figure can be maintained only by a massive increase in prescription charges, far beyond the level of inflation, which has been hinted at and leaked but which, as far as I know, no Minister has yet emboldened himself to announce?

What savings do the Government expect from the abolition of the Inner London education authority, the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils? Nowhere in this forecast does a figure for that saving appear, yet we were told that that was the purpose of their abolition. Will the Minister of State confirm the figures that I suggested a moment ago for the job loss that the White Paper entails? It would be extraordinary if the Government hypothesised every other outcome and predicted every other result but had not the slightest view and had not made the slightest estimate of how many jobs the proposed cuts were likely to lose.

The White Paper already makes one assertion look even shabbier that it did on the day that it was made—that the Chancellor looks forward to a fortnight tomorrow as an opportunity to present a Budget for jobs. In almost every aspect, the White Paper prepares for another year in which unemployment will increase. It prepares for that by cutting capital investment, by cutting Civil Service manpower, by reducing expenditure from local authorities and by setting the scene for the Chancellor to fulfil other obligations and to pursue other priorities which are more important to him. It prepares for the Chancellor once more, as is always the case, to choose the high unemployment option.

Mr. Peter Rees: The right hon. Gentleman has been free with his challenges, as he is entitled to be. I issued him one in the debate on the autumn statement and at the beginning of my speech today. It is simple but fundamental. What level of public expenditure would the right hon. Gentleman advocate if he were in power now and for the next three years, and to which areas would he direct it?

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman always asks the questions. I shall give him two immediate answers. The Chancellor's decision, which is likely to be taken a fortnight tomorrow, to reduce the PSBR from this year's level is misguided and misconceived, as the money could be much better spent invested in job-creating projects. The £1·5 billion that the Chancellor still hopes to devote to tax cuts would be much better spent invested in jobs and in reducing unemployment. That area of expenditure is possible. I know, every time that I answer this question, the pathetic obsession of the Government with talking about any policy other than their own. In my 20 years in the House, I have never known a Chancellor who was so ashamed of discussing what he was doing and the consequences of his policy.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: That does not surprise me, because I have never known a Chancellor who was so unpopular. He is unpopular crucially because of the spirit and intention revealed in the White Paper — total disregard of the unemployed. Because of that disregard, we propose to vote for the amendment.

5.59 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye so that I can make my maiden speech.

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor as the Member for Enfield, Southgate, Sir Anthony Berry. Sir Anthony was a popular member and his death in the bombing at Brighton last October was tragic. I had the privilege of hearing you, Mr. Speaker, outside the House deliver an address in which you recalled Sir Anthony's life and his many fine qualities. I shall not attempt to repeat the well chosen words that you used on that occasion, but, from my constituency experience, I shall add a few words.

It is clear that Sir Anthony was absolutely dedicated to the welfare of his constituents. He showed that dedication by his custom of visiting people in their homes to discuss their problems. That courtesy and kindness was typical of Sir Anthony. It is a stunning paradox that such a kind, courteous and gentle man should lose his life at the hands of men of violence. I know that the whole House joins me in remembering Sir Anthony, deploring his death and grieving for him. I am sure that all hon. Members also join me in paying tribute to Lady Berry, who has borne her bereavement with dignity and courage. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Sir Anthony Berry made his maiden speech almost exactly 20 years ago in January 1965. He referred to the part of the North Circular road that runs through the constituency of Enfield, Southgate. He looked forward to that piece of road being widened shortly. Twenty years later we are still expecting the road to be widened. We often hear the Government say that not all public expenditure is necessarily desirable. Many of my constituents agree, because they are living in properties that are decaying, not because anything is wrong with them but because of planning blight. A number of my constituents would like the Government to save the money that they have in mind for the project and to allow them to continue to live in their homes rather than cause those homes to be destroyed.

At the other end of the constituency, far from the din of the north circular road, my constituency reaches the countryside. One can drive along the Hadley road and see nothing but green fields on either side. I imagine that I am one of the few London Members who has the privilege of having a number of farmers among his constituents.

In the middle of my constituency is Winchmore Hill. One of my history books says that about the year 1600 the people of Winchmore Hill were very primitive and much

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

given to witchcraft. Recently, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to the belief that public expenditure could cure all our ills as

"an ancient form of witchcraft."

I assure my right hon. Friend that nowadays the good people of Winchmore Hill are no more attracted to that practice than their near neighbours in Palmers Green or Cockfosters.

Frequently, when discussion in the House turns to public expenditure, a number of hon. Members wonder whether they can improve on the traditional procedures by which they consider the revenue that the Government raise at one time of the year, in the Budget, and how that money is spent at another time of the year, in the autumn round of discussions. The Armstrong committee considered that matter in 1980 and came forward with a series of proposals for bringing the consideration of taxation and spending together. The proposal was considered by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Select Committee on Procedure (Finance). The Government went some way towards meeting the point by devising the autumn statement in the form in which we now know it.

In its present form, the autumn statement has given rise to a number of unforeseen difficulties. Public and press attention naturally focus on that part of the autumn statement in which the Government say how they view the prospective fiscal adjustment in the following Budget—whether they consider that taxation is likely to be increased or decreased. During the past two years we have seen that, whatever the Government say, the results can be unfortunate. In November 1983 the Government announced that the prospect was for a moderate increase in taxation in the following Budget. The Government were denounced for being too gloomy. People asked whether the Government were still committed to their policy of cutting taxation. In the event, all that gloom was unnecessary, because the Government were able to decrease taxes in the Budget.

Last November, the Government said that the prospect was for a decrease in taxation in the Budget, but that statement brought denunciation on the Government. At first people said, "The Government have underestimated how much money there is to give away in the Budget." People thought that the Government were being too cautious. Subsequently, the Government were denounced for having thrown caution to the wind. It appeared that the Government were more determined to cut taxation than to continue their fight against inflation.

No one can reliably estimate in the autumn the leeway that the Government will have in the spring. Whatever figure is announced, it either increases or depresses expectations. More importantly, it creates confusion about the Government's policy. Sometimes that can have serious consequences.

Our present arrangements are an uneasy halfway house between our traditional procedures and the radical proposals in the Armstrong report. This middle position does not satisfy those hon. Members who want a thorough-going reform. On the other hand, it sets a number of hares running about in a way that is not helpful to the Government or to the House. I cannot help thinking that the present position is likely to prove unstable and that we shall want to move either forward towards the Armstrong proposals or backward to the position in the old days when the Chancellor said very little in advance of his Budget statement.

May I use the opportunity of my maiden speech, Mr. Speaker, to make a point that concerns the relationship between public expenditure and unemployment? I am reminded of what happened to me last year at the Conservative party conference in Brighton. At about 2 am on what proved to be that terrible morning of 12 October, I was standing in the bar of the Grand hotel. Because the hour was late I got into a heated discussion with a journalist. He said, "The Government's policies are designed to create unemployment." Of course, I disagreed with that. The discussion became heated. To emphasise his point, the journalist beat the pillar beside us with his fist and said, "This is a pillar; that is a fact. Your policies are to create unemployment; that is a fact, too." The discussion became even more acrimonious and the journalist rather abusive, so I left the Grand hotel and went safely to bed in my hotel down the road.

In the morning I reflected on two things. First, I was grateful to that journalist for having been abusive towards me; otherwise I might have stayed in the Grand hotel and been there at the time the bomb went off. Secondly, I reflected on the fact that the pillar which he had thumped with his hand and which represented for him absolute certainty was probably a pile of rubble. I thought that, in the light of day, the journalist, too, was a little less certain about the motives of Government policy.

Although I understand that the Opposition believe with absolute conviction that the way to reduce unemployment is to increase public spending, I ask them to understand the absolute sincerity with which Conservative Members say that to increase public spending is to increase taxation which would lead to fewer jobs and higher unemployment.

6.8 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): It is a great pleasure to congratulate warmly the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Portillo) on an admirable maiden speech. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House who had the pleasure of listening to him agree that he was eloquent, confident and witty. As one who took a humble part in the election which brought the hon. Gentleman to the House, I thought that he was as agile in marshalling his presentation this afternoon as he was during the campaign in dealing with the garden gates and garden paths of Southgate. I do not want the hon. Gentleman to be alarmed. I have no intention of carrying that congratulation to the lengths that were applied earlier to his colleague and hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), was who was described as winsome. That is a compliment that I shall spare the hon. Member for Southgate.

I understand that one consequence of the hon. Gentleman's election to the House is that the Conservative party has lost his expert assistance in its back rooms. But it has gained an expert Back Bencher, who may not remain a Back Bencher for long if his party returns to power during his tenure of the Enfield, Southgate seat. I am sure that we all look forward to hearing a great deal more from him and also to discovering in his later speeches whether he is in favour of advance to a green Budget, or whether he wants to go back to the bad old days which were so warmly greeted by the Conservative party antiquarians when he mentioned them in his speech.

This annual debate, its form and terms have been greatly misrepresented outside the House, because in recent months the fact that we have a debate on the whole of public expenditure, including estimates, which usually turn out to be wildly wrong, of local government expenditure plans, has been represented to the country as an annual and firm precedent for Parliament grossly to interfere in local government finance by settling the local rates and how they should be spent.

I should like to take the opportunity to repeat the obvious point that we in the House do nothing of the sort. By tradition, we are only asked, and can only be asked, to take note of the public expenditure White Paper. There is nothing in the argument that Ministers have been adducing outside the House that this annual debate is a precedent for the House of Commons to interfere in the way that local government raises, and the extent to which it spends, its money.

I hope that Members will recall the fact that the last Labour Administration were defeated at the end of a public expenditure White Paper debate and carried on the next morning as Her Majesty's Government without any hitch, as, of course, they were naturally entitled to do. It is a debate for observing public expenditure plans, and not for sanctifying, let alone voting, the cash for them.

The first point that I wish to make about these plans is that whether we take them cooked by the Treasury for presentation to the House, or reduced to their raw but refined state by the Select Committee — whichever choice we care to make, I am sure that the Select Committee's adjustments are necessary for a fair presentation—public expenditure, on average, has been rising substantially year by year since 1980. It has been rising by 2 per cent., if we take the Treasury's unadjusted figures, and by some 3 per cent. if we make the necessary adjustments which the Select Committee makes year by year without apparently getting the Treasury to amend its ways. That of course, does not represent expenditure that produces marvellous tangible improvements in the country's equipment or the well-being of our people; it actually represents the appalling year-on-year cost of the medium-term financial strategy and the Government's approach to public finance and the running of the economy.

The British people are patient, and, fortunately for the Government, they have many other things which they regard as more important than politics or even their tax demands. For some years they tolerated that rise in cost. For some of them it might have been on the ground that this was an experiment which was worth making and which they must give a fair trial. Public opinion polls and other signs and portents show that even the long-suffering British public are now beginning to realise the appalling cost of the experiment and to say that it is time it was called off.

The fact that year by year we have all these public expenditure plans, usually underestimating the cost of the misery which the medium-term financial strategy is causing, but, nevertheless, costing it out in an appallingly graphic way, surely shows that the process should be severely modified, if not entirely reversed.

As is well known, the Government's policies have serious effects on the cost of cash benefits for the unemployed and the associated social problems, and on the personal social services, which are now under heavy strain as a result of the prolonged unemployment, especially among older people, who have given up hope of ever obtaining a job again, and young people who do not know what it is to go to work after leaving school.

There is also a substantial increase in the cost of law and order. We must count ourselves lucky and grateful for the fact that there has not been more disorder to contain — it must always be contained — as a result of the hardship that the Government have inflicted. But the cost of precautions is very high.

It is important to note that this steady rise in public expenditure does not just completely contradict the hopes of Conservative Members for their original policies; it also shows that the policies cannot be implemented without continuous and increasing social costs, and that the position will become worse. I challenge the Minister when he replies to give any sign that there will be an improving trend in social cost, reflected in the financial cost, of the policies which the Government stubbornly insist on implementing.

Nowhere is that more clear than in the reductions which the burden of providing for the unemployed and all their problems are causing in the nation's proper capital expenditure for maintaining, improving and modernising, its public assets. The Government are being deliberately perverse. The Chief Secretary gave that impression, to me at any rate, when he was good enough to appear before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. On two counts, which I single out, he refused to acknowledge the reasonableness of the questions that we were putting to him. First—this is important if the Government are to retain control of public expenditure — he refused to admit frankly that when he meets Ministers in charge of spending Departments in the well-known round of the Chief Secretary dealing with departmental bids during the late summer, he is completely deprived of any efficient or acknowledged yardstick to measure their claims—they are simply asking for money to maintain the assets and physical properties for which their Departments are responsible.

In evidence the Chief Secretary eventually agreed—this is all carefully recorded in questions 262 to 268 in the evidence taken by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on 18 February — that in trying to counter and to reduce the spending bids of his opposite numbers in Government he, on behalf of the Treasury, had to rely "on one's colleagues, obviously, to a degree, to judge these as they are put up to them on a case-by-case basis."

The fact that the Government have no adequate record of public property, let alone the condition which it is in, renders the Chief Secretary virtually naked when he goes to the conference chamber to try to counter and control the spending bids of Ministers in charge of the great spending Departments.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Unlike the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who refused, both in the debate on the autumn statement and today, to say what level of public spending his party proposes for next year, and given the fact that the leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has now joined the debate, will the hon. Gentleman tell us what precise level of public spending his party would like next year?

Mr. Wainwright: In response to such an intelligent question, I should like to oblige the hon. Gentleman

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straight away. However, I must point out—and the hon. Gentleman, as an accountant, will be the first to understand—that, just as the Chief Secretary is crippled, in his arguments with spending Ministers, by the fact that we have no record of public assets, their value and the extent to which they have depreciated, so every other party in the House is equally crippled. I make a plea for a proper record and data base of public assets as much in the interests of future Governments as in the interests of the Government of the day.

I mentioned a figure which we made public last week of an initial boost to public capital spending of £1 billion in the next financial year, which is one of the alliance's priorities for the Budget. We believe that that is the minimum that should be made available. However, I cannot prove that that is the figure required to maintain public assets at their present value. I suspect that it is an understatement to say that our figure for boosting public capital expenditure in the next financial year, £1 billion, is adequate. We would hope to maintain that if we were in power, year by year, for at least the next three years. There is no secret about that. It was made public last Friday.

When the Chief Secretary finally admitted that he was not armed with the necessary figures to deal with spending bids for more capital works by his opposite numbers in the Cabinet, he was asked whether the Government ought to start remedying that state of affairs by establishing a data base, a record of public assets and their condition, so that the House may know what is necessary year by year to provide for their depreciation. In tones of some surprise, the Chief Secretary said:

> "If you are asking me whether the Treasury is a possessor of some kind of doomsday survey of all the capital assets of the whole public sector, the answer is no."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to explain to us, as if we did not know, that the public sector owns rather a lot of property. However, the "doomsday survey", as the Chief Secretary chose to call it, is nothing more than a register of plant and buildings and other assets which every limited company is required by law and accounting convention to possess and keep up to date. It seems extraordinary that the Chief Secretary should imply that what was done in the 11th century, with no equipment more sophisticated than a quill pen, should be beyond the resources of Governments in the present century, armed with all our devices and techniques of taking blocks of capital expenditure according to the year in which they are made rather than counting all the spoons in all the public canteens in the country. Nobody indulges in that sort of detail any longer, or needs to.

Without those figures, the House is put in a most unsuitable and unbusinesslike position. When we have debates like this, we do not know whether we are being presented with figures which keep the public assets in a reasonable state, or whether the Government are milking the condition of public property to try to reduce taxation.

I should like now to refer to the relief of the most urgent and pressing poverty, most of it in families, which is commonplace today and, I am sure, well known to all hon. Members through their surgeries, mailbags and in other ways. The alliance wishes to increase the provision for current public spending in the next financial year and years to come in order at the very least to bring relief to the hardest cases. We cannot responsibly suggest any way of banishing poverty or anything like that in the present situation. To get anywhere near that would require a much more buoyant economy and a working contribution from some 3·5 million people who are not allowed to work at present.

However, in our present economic straits, what would be possible is a great expansion of the family income supplement—not as a long-term remedy, but as a short-term and emergency remedy. There would also have to be a proper uprating of the supplementary benefit allowance to those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months. We regard it as a scandal that their benefits should be some 20 per cent. less than the general rate of long-term supplementary benefit. All that improvement could be done in the first year by expenditure of approximately £1·3 billion, and we believe that it is an urgent priority.

Under the ludicrous way in which the House debates public expenditure at a different time from debating revenue, it is possible to misrepresent that as simply a reckless bid for more public spending without saying where it is to come from. However, the fact is that the Government have their own views. It so happens that their views would not affect the expenditure side of the account but, instead, the revenue side. The rumour is that the Chancellor wishes to come to the rescue of all income tax payers in the country by raising the thresholds.

That is a debate for the revenue side of the account on a different occasion. I pause simply to point out how extremely difficult it is to handle these matters in the House when the same problems can be addressed through either the revenue or expenditure side of the account. However, I must add that, in the view of the alliance, a measure directed straight to those who are in the greatest poverty is greatly preferable to a raising of the thresholds, which benefits large numbers of people who, no doubt, are glad to have a tax saving, but are not in urgent need of the money. That is perhaps the biggest divide in terms of public finance, apart from the capital side of the account, between the Government and the alliance.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Over the weekend several of us will have seen reports of the £4 billion reflation which, I am informed, is the policy of the alliance. Is that common policy to all sides of the alliance? Is it accompanied by any measure of exchange controls?

Mr. Wainwright: I am grateful to hear that reference to "all sides of the alliance". The more sides we can gather into the alliance, the better we are pleased. I think that it was clear to any reader of the reputable newspapers on Saturday morning that those were alliance Budget priorities, not an alternative Budget. People who cannot inspect the books must not try to present an alternative Budget. Those were the alliance's Budget priorities introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) to the press last Friday and then elaborated upon by the leader of the Social Democratic party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). Yes, it is an alliance document which advocates — I must be careful not to annoy the Chair—a selective reflation which amounts to £4 billion in the first year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about exchange controls?

Mr. Wainwright: I shall not discuss exchange controls in the middle of a public expenditure debate. I am happy to talk to the hon. Gentleman about that another time. I confirm that it fell to me—I have never repented of it—to welcome the former Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to lift exchange controls when he made the announcement in the House. It was a wise, civilised and internationalist step to take.

The essential matter in this debate is to persuade the Government, not to reduce public expenditure or to repent of their covert increases in public spending, which have been about 3 per cent. a year since 1980, but to redirect their increased public expenditure so that, instead of dropping into the bottomless well of unemployment, it is used to build up our human and physical resources.

6.30 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): It is my great pleasure to begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on an outstanding maiden speech, which we greatly enjoyed. He paid a fitting tribute to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Berry, who died in tragic circumstances. He was a good friend to many hon. Members, and certainly the words of my hon. Friend, when he paid tribute to Sir Anthony Berry's work in the constituency and in the House, were entirely appropriate. I have had the benefit of my hon. Friend's expertise and advice in one of his former incarnations, and therefore I know that he will make a good contribution to our economic debates. One of his predecessors in Enfield before the constituency was divided, the late Iain Macleod, played a major part in our economic debates. Therefore, he has predecessors of whom the House is proud. My hon. Friend will have a difficult task in succeeding them. We look forward to hearing what he has to say, not least about procedural reform. Some of the matters to which he referred have been covered by the report of the Select Committee on Procedure during the last Parliament, and I hope that we can make progress on them.

I shall proceed immediately to those issues. Public expenditure White Paper debates have never been satisfactory or popular. The reason is not difficult to discover. In a sense they are a post mortem on decisions that have already been taken. As my hon. Friend pointed out, much of the matter has already been discussed during the debate on the autumn statement. At the same time, such debates anticipate what is likely to be said in a few days' time in the Budget. As these debates are sandwiched between a post mortem and the Budget, it is not surprising that they have been never been successful.

It would be appropriate to have this debate not ahead of the Budget, but perhaps in June or July when we can appraise the previous White Paper in the light of the Select Committee's reports and consider the priorities for the forthcoming White Paper, which begins to be formulated in June or July. I am sorry that that has not had support from the official Opposition. The suggestion is certainly worth considering.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) pointed out that on a previous occasion the Labour Government were defeated on a similar debate. The net effect of that defeat was nil, and proceedings continued exactly as previously. Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that the debate is not regarded as one in which the vote is important. However, the debate certainly is important. At one time it used to be a two-day debate, but that has lapsed, and perhaps it is just as well.

I hope that our debate will be enhanced by the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. It was a considerable feat that the Clerks and advisers were able to produce the report in printed form two or three days after the report was agreed. Therefore, it is right to congratulate those responsible for that and to express our thanks to the Treasury officials who gave evidence and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary, who appeared before the Committee at short notice to answer questions on highly complex issues.

We have included in the report the Government's reply to our report on the autumn statement, which appears on page 42. The response was neither helpful nor adequate. The Select Committee seeks to raise the standard of public debate and to improve the mechanism for managing our economic affairs. In our report on the autumn statement, we pointed out that the question of priorities was not being dealt with satisfactorily. We said:

> "The evidence we have received does not convince us that there are adequate machinery and procedures to enable Cabinet to take an overall view of the relative merits of departmental programmes . . . Recent events suggest that in some cases individual departments have been allocated a lump sum by the Treasury and then left to determine their own priorities within the limits set . . .
>
> Against this background we *recommend* a re-appraisal of the machinery for determining public expenditure priorities . . . with particular reference to the need to improve the allocation across departments."

The Treasury's response to that recommendation is not as forthcoming as it might be. The allocation of priorities of public expenditure is one of the major tasks that face a Government and one of the major issues in which the House has a fundamental interest because it affects many different aspects of our public life. I hope, therefore, that further consideration will be given to that recommendation.

Does the White Paper give a reasonable appraisal of the public expenditure position? In our report we pay tribute to the improvement in the format and to the considerable trouble to which the Treasury has gone to make the presentation more understandable. We would not want anything that we say in the report to detract from that compliment. At the same time, some of the presentation is misleading. Chart 1.1 is a block diagram which shows that the block has scarcely changed in size for three years. That gives the impression that all is well in the best of all possible worlds, that the Government have everything under control and that their targets are being achieved. It seems to the Committee, which produced a unanimous report, that adjustments need to be made to those figures to give a much truer picture. I shall deal with three adjustments.

First, there is a strong case for considering the matter in cost rather than in cash terms. We should allow for the fact that as the rate of inflation has fallen more than anticipated — all hon. Members welcome that — the amount of cash going on public expenditure should be adjusted accordingly. We should see it somewhat below the cash limits.

My next point does not appear in our report. When cash limits were first imposed, they were a good idea because inflation was rising rapidly. Understandably, they curtailed the rate of increase in public expenditure. However, they are not an effective restraint when the rate

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of inflation is falling faster than anticipated, because in those circumstances one would reasonably expect Departments to spend below their cash limits. However, the danger is that they will spend up to their cash limits. That point should be considered if we want to bring public expenditure under control, given all the other pressures.

When cash limits were first introduced, the Treasury was understandably reluctant to change back to or even to take account of cost terms. That has long since passed. Therefore, we could now reasonably concentrate more on cost terms without undermining the Treasury's basic approach to cash limits.

The second adjustment relates to debt interest. Here I find the Treasury's approach very strange. If one looks at the figures for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88—they appear on page viii of our report—one sees that debt interest goes up substantially from £9 billion to £9·5 billion to £10 billion. That figure is not included in the planning total. Consequently, public expenditure looks much better than would otherwise be the case. We are told that that is so because it is something which is subject to limited control, but that is true of much of the demand-determined expenditure which appears in the White Paper and which is part of the planning total. That is not a sensible reason for not including debt interest in the White Paper analysis.

We are told that interest is taken into account when considering the PSBR, fiscal adjustment, and so on, but it is difficult to see how that is done. We are constantly told by the Chancellor that the Government's policy is that revenue shall determine expenditure, not the other way about. If so, and if interest charges suddenly go up, one might expect some countervailing reduction elsewhere in the public expenditure programme. That is not the case. Therefore, the White Paper's method of accounting for interest is not satisfactory. It gives a misleading impression.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary said that all this was more a matter of presentation than of substance. That may be so. I agree that to some extent it is the presentation about which I am complaining, but if the presentation is not sufficiently transparent, matters of substance may go uncommented on, and the Treasury may delude itself into believing that it is doing better than it is.

There has been a long-running battle between the Treasury and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on how asset sales should be treated. The Chancellor has consistently maintained that the proceeds of asset sales should be treated as if they were negative expenditure. That is convenient in the context of the presentation of the White Paper figures. For example, if one has a large chunk of sales of British Telecom, the public expenditure figure appears to be reduced by that amount, as does the PSBR. In our view, that is not a very good way of treating this. It would be more realistic if it were treated as a means of funding the PSBR rather than reducing the PSBR and public expenditure.

This is particularly relevant to council house sales. The sale of council houses is an asset sale which in the past has been treated by the Chancellor as a reduction in public expenditure and the PSBR. Understandably, councils now wish to spend the money which they have received from council house sales. As the Select Committee points out, that could be foreseen. It was apparent that if cou houses and got the proceeds, they would want to money.

The Select Committee, in paragraph 40, poi

"We find it strange that the Government did not f problems inherent in this accounting treatment transactions, or its scale. We are left with the impressi rationale for the existing arrangements has had everyt with the Government's desire to reduce the apparent PSBR, and too little to do with the rational use of loca assets."

The Select Committee's previous report was, wrong when it said that this should be treated as of funding the PSBR rather than as a reduction expenditure. The Select Committee should have the word "temporary", as it does in its present rep was a temporary means of funding the PSBR. Bu included a presentation which makes the figures lo favourable in previous years, the Chancellor confronted with the fact that, from a presentatio of view, the figures begin to look more difficu future.

More particularly, there is an underlying reality concepts. Therefore, the argument that councils s allowed to spend the previously prescribed pr —40 per cent. rather than 20 per cent.—a background of considerable excess capacity industry, seems to be quite strong.

I wish to comment briefly on negative financing limits and the nationalised industries, es in relation to water authorities. It is slightly worry I seem to be in agreement with the right hon. Me Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). W carefully consider the justification for saying that t industry should pay off its debt and from then o finance future investment entirely from current Most industries tend to finance a long-term pr borrowing, not by finance entirely from current We questioned the Chief Secretary about this, and kind enough to send a subsequent note which ap the last page of the Select Committee's report. GEC as an example. In reality, if investment is in this way, consumers are effectively financ investment which, in the case of water authoriti continue for perhaps the next 50 years to the be future generations and those yet unborn. It n arguable whether that is a good way of manag affairs.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I have just had a meeting Anglian water authority, which will have to incr rates this year by 12·5 per cent., for the reason g my right hon. Friend. The authority tells us that it have to increase its rates by the same amount ne and, perhaps, the year after, when paying from rather than by borrowing will apply. If water aut increase their prices by more than twice the inflation for the next three years, that is surely se

Mr. Higgins: I have considerable sympathy w hon. Friend's view. We must appraise the und concept on which this proposal is now based.

Against this background, the Chancellor is faced with an extremely difficult set of choices w considers the Budget. He will have to decide wh alleviate the burden of taxation—perhaps to al increase in public expenditure in the area that we ha been discussing—or to reduce borrowing. He is

immensely difficult situation, because in some respects the so-called fiscal adjustment will now be higher than some months ago due to changes in the exchage rate. On the other hand, the extent to which the economy is vulnerable to exchange rates, if we are to have a give-away Budget, is likely to be considerable. He must therefore make an extremely difficult judgment. It is a question of hitting the right balance between the three items that I have just mentioned.

We have recently been concerned about the effect which the rise in the dollar—rocketing upwards—has had on interest rates. That is of grave concern to mortgage payers and borrowers. I am more worried about the effect that a sudden collapse of the dollar may have on our economy and on the problems that the Chancellor will face in the Budget. I very much hope that at international level we can procure reasonable contingency plans to deal with that, because a comparatively slow rise in the dollar could present far greater problems than those we are now facing.

6.50 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimbsby): I do not intend to follow the line of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) who gave a clear and straightforward exposition of the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, which he chairs, and of which I am a member. I hope that his right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench have noted that this is very much an agreed report by the Select Committee and that it is very critical of the Government's expenditure plans. The "Worthing handbag" of recommendations was endorsed by the entire Committee.

The problem with the public expenditure White Paper is that essentially it is an excercise in pulling wool over the eyes of the Government's own less intellectual supporters. Wooly-headed monetarists are having the wool pulled over their eyes. The White Paper claims that the Government are doing what they are not doing—namely, controlling public expenditure. The White Paper attempts to say that in their terms the Government have been successful. First, those terms are fallacious and directly harmful to the real economy, and, secondly, the Government have failed even according to their own terms. This public expenditure White Paper cannot conceal their failure. Indeed, from the way in which it is set out, the White Paper is an example of the debasement of the Government's own statistics. Our report was, in "Committeespeak", extremely damning. I refer only to a few of the recommendations:

"misleading impression, . . . consistent failure, . . . reserve allowance of £3 billion is likely to prove inadequate."

That is "Committeespeak."

The report does not say that the Government are not telling the truth, but, in "Committeespeak", the report comes as near to saying that as it can. The members of the Committee came from both sides of the House. The report is a damning indictment of the Government's public expenditure plans. They are no more than an exercise in creative diminuendo. They minimise the expenditure for the years ahead. It is an exercise in slimming by prayer. In all their previous efforts, the Government have been right in only one of their five sets of predictions. The overall pattern has been that public expenditure has risen as a proportion of national income from 39 to 42 per cent. That may be more an example of their contribution towards the reduction of the national income than it is their success in controlling public expenditure. Howeve even in their terms the indictment is damning.

The position is shown to be even worse in the Whi Paper. The Government are pretending that, with a election approaching, with Back Benchers becomir increasingly nervous, jittery and anxious about their seat with the Confederation of British Industry venturing to g off its knees from the grovelling, supplicant position th it has adopted thus far towards the Government and wi the infrastructure deteriorating as it is, they will be ab to cut public expenditure. They will be unable to do s The Government pretend that there will be dramat reductions overall. Taking into account the cost of th miners' strike, the figures for which are to be publishe in the next two or three weeks, the Government a pretending that they will be able to hold public expenditur when experience shows that it will increase in the thre years covered by the White Paper by 8 or 9 per cent. W know it, the Government know it, and the world know it.

Why are the Government going through this elaborat farce of pretending that they will be able to hold publi expenditure? It is rather like the exercises performed b a failed slimmer—a slimmer who is still flabby. That i not a picture of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but if th stomach fits he can wear it. This failed slimmer, stil flabby, stands in front of the mirror and desperately hold in his stomach and says, "I have not done very well so far but, oh boy, how I will lose weight over the next three years." Nevertheless, the circumstances which would hel to bring about the weight loss—I am holding in my stomach as I say those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker—will be far more difficult politically than those faced by the Chancellor during the previous period.

The Government have carried out an exercise o fabrication and false prediction of distorting the basis o their policy. They have assumed in the White Paper tha pay rises in the public sector will be held at 3 per cent. In no previous period have increases been held at 3 per cent., and all the signs are that they will not be held at 3 per cent. during this period. Yet the Government are still attached to this theoretical, unrealistic figure and to an unreal inflation figure.

The Government assume that inflation will come down, although we all know that, particularly because of the impact of interest rates by which the country is being crucified today, in a way which has never happened before, inflation will increase. Real interest rates are higher now than they have ever been since 1922. Yet the Government pretend that, despite that inflationary impact and the fall in the pound against the dollar, which is resulting in yet another inflationary impact, they will continue to bring down inflation. That inbuilt basic assumption will not be fulfilled.

The Government's standard assumption is that unemployment will not increase. I am assuming that a growth of 2 per cent. is built into the public expenditure White Paper, because that is the assumption made in the medium term financial strategy of 1984. However, even with an estimated growth of 2 per cent., there is still scope for an increase in unemployment of between 200,000 and 300,000 at a cost of about £500 million in terms of the increase in unemployment pay. Therefore, assuming that a growth of less than 2 per cent. will take place as the recovery falters, I believe that the increase in

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unemployment will be even more expensive. Even on the Government's assumption that the number of unemployed will remain constant, expenditure on the unemployed will increase by 9 per cent. Yet, even if we assume that the unemployment figure remains constant and that unemployment benefit will be increased in line with inflation, unemployment payments must increase by 14 per cent. Where, therefore, has this mysterious assumption of 9 per cent. come from? The Government have fiddled the inevitable basics of their prediction. The Government have fiddled even more the actual expenditures that they control. A system of creative accounting has been turned into a system of government by the Treasury Front Bench.

Local government expenditure is crucial. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to the assumed savings from the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties. That saving, in paragraph 16, is estimated to be £100 million. It is not a scientifically worked out saving. The Government have told the civil servants to assume that this saving will result from the abolition of those authorities. We know that that figure will not materialise. There was an article last week in the *Financial Times* which pointed out that savings are unlikely to be made upon any prediction, yet there is an inbuilt assumption that £100 million will be saved. The real spending by local authorities on goods and services has increased during the last five years by 2·5 per cent. That has taken place despite all the cuts in rate support grant and all the attempts to restrain spending by local government. However, the Government assume that during the next three years local government spending will be reduced by 7 per cent. That is a totally unreal estimate, even given that torturer's gallery of weapons that the Government have mobilised against local government in their desperate attempt to control it. We all know that that is a fallacious assumption.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman says that local authority spending has increased by only 2·5 per cent., but that has been the result of adding in a substantial increase in capital spending. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that current spending has risen by 10 per cent. in real terms over that period and that is the figure that the Government expect to be able to control.

Mr. Mitchell: My point is that current and capital spending increased by 2·5 per cent. That is the important figure. Many hon. Members would prefer capital spending to be increased further because it is essential that it should be increased in so many areas. However, my point is that, even after mobilising all the weapons that the Government have mobilised until now, they have been able to screw down local government spending only by that figure. Their assumption that they will be able to screw it down by 7 per cent. over the next three years is totally fallacious. It is the usual trick of the Government saying, " We are unable to control our own spending, so let us pass the buck to somebody else. The buck stops at local government." If that is to be the Government's policy it will lead to chaos and extreme difficulties for local government. It will cut across several bases which underlie Govenment policy.

The Government want to transfer treatment in hospitals to treatment in the community, yet spending upon the personal social services is to come down by 2 to 3 per at the same time as that transfer is brought about. Government tell us that they want to improve the cities, yet urban spending is down 11 per cent. in period covered by the public expenditure White Pap

The fiddling becomes even worse with the nationa industries. That has been adequately dealt with alre Gas and electricity are being used and will continue used as milch cows — a form of disguised taxa putting the burden of heavy charges on those least ab bear them, and raising money indirectly for Government at the expense of our competitiveness i world market. That procedure is now being transferr the water authorities, which will cause major problem all the water authorities and a major outcry about w rates which is already building up.

Overall, the dramatic reduction in the exte financing limits of nationalised industries which Government posit is impossible on any prediction. It mean either massive increases in prices or an enorm acceleration of growth in the economy, which we k will not occur.

The fiddling of the figures is also true for so security. If one deducts spending on the unemployed, has risen by 13·5 per cent. in the past three years. Y is predicted that it will increase only 4·5 per cent. in t of even worse social difficulties in the three years ahe That is impossible to achieve. One cannot see on w basis that prediction is made.

There is even inadequate allowance for the EEC buc contributions that we know we shall all have to make would be nice to see the Government dedicat themselves with the same determination to the contro agriculture expenditure, which increases pari passu w production, as they have shown to the miners. Can it that the miners must be broken and their subsidies because they are a Labour-voting section of community, when the even more massive subsidies wh go to the farming community under the comm agricultural policy and in a national support system well, which have made 10,000 millionaires of the bigg landowners in Britain in the past few years, will not tackled in the same way by the Government, who dedicated to cutting spending, simply because th sections of the community vote for the Government?

The predictions in the White Paper are unattainable am an incurable romantic, rather like the man who AIDS and herpes at the same time, but I can see no w in which the predictions will be fulfilled on the figur The cuts which will be necessary will hit jobs in the Ci Service, local government and housing, when we nee huge increase. The Building Employers Confederati estimates a loss on those figures of 600,000 jobs in building industry. Employment in all those areas will hit and costs will be increased, just when the econo needs a boost from public spending.

This is an exercise in slimming by prayer. It has be implemented in an attempt to pull the wool over the ey of the Government's Back Benchers in the House Commons, particularly over those of the Governmen monetarist supporters. Therefore, it is nothing more th a ritual casting of artificial pearls before very real swin It is typical of a Government who have grown accustom to the manipulation of facts, to half-truths, to fiddling

the statistics and to distortion of the trends. The Government are dedicated to thinking small and then pretending that they have achieved their target.

I realise that that method of thinking is forced from the top by someone who believes that the truth is in her own head, not in the world outside, which is the beginning of the bunker mentality. That bunker mentality is embodied in these public expenditure plans.

The tragedy is that the Civil Service is now being forced into becoming a machine for justifying on the figures predictions which are not its own, which are forced on it by Ministers, and which have no basis in fact. That is no basis for adequate decision-making on a sensible assessment of priorities. It is more a matter of abnormal psychology than economics, but I must point out that that is the basis of the strategy.

The real question, which Labour Members in particular must ask is why the whole farcical exercise is necessary. Why, when the country is getting meaner, shoddier, nastier and more divided, when our public capital and infrastructure are crumbling as they are, do we have to go for this kind of fallacious exercise to justify Government policies to people who are wrong in the first place?

The whole basis of the strategy is to get public sector borrowing down. It will not. Yet the Government have to pretend that it will. Why make that pretence in the first place? We are already suffering the consequences of having what I think is the second lowest public sector borrowing requirement in the advanced industrial world. We are already suffering the consequences of a deflationary stance. Why go on to make that worse when what we need is Vivien Nicholson, the major pools winner of the 1960s whose slogan was "spend, spend, spend", turned into a system of government.

The part of Vivien Nicholson is already being played with great effect by that supreme actor, Ronald Reagan, in the United States with a deficit, which any Keynesian such as myself, particularly a super-Keynesian—perhaps that is what President Reagan is—would approve of wholeheartedly. The result has been to bring down unemployment in the United States by 7 million. That option would be available to us were we not so fixated on unobtainable objectives and so busy pretending that we will achieve those objectives in the next three years.

Mr. Yeo: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to follow the policy of spend, spend, spend, will he remedy the deficiency left by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and say to exactly what level his party is now advocating that public expenditure should rise?

Mr. Mitchell: All that the Government have to justify their policy is the endless asking of questions, such as how much the Opposition would spend, yet we are not in charge of the books. I would spend generously, liberally and even massively to stimulate the economy. If there is a deficiency of demand, as there is, the only way to remedy that deficiency is to spend. It is the only way out. It makes straightforward sense. That is what Reagan is doing in the United States.

The only growth that Britain has is a product of President Reagan's sin in the States — his enormous deficit financing which has stimulated the United States economy and is in turn stimulating our exports to that economy. We are not doing as well as other countries—

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South) *rose*—

Mr. Mitchell: I shall not give way again. I am bringing my remarks to a close.

Keynesianism still works and the American experience proves that it works. To ask me now to put a figure on it is the most arcane kind of childish politics imaginable. The Government's stance is far too restrictive and deflationary. We need to expand, and the only way to do so is by borrowing. The only way that we shall keep any recovery going is by stimulating it further with public spending not only on the infrastructure, which is creaking and groaning and needs massive repair, but on housing. What a folly it is to have building workers out of work and houses that want building, and all the things that need doing around our communities, when the unemployed are available to do them. All we need is to spend the money to bring the resources together with the people, get the job done and stimulate the economy in that way.

I cannot see why, unless it is the absolute certainty of the second-rate mind that possesses the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), the lesson that was so clear in the 1930s is not clear today. Everything points to an expansion triggered by public spending and sustained by low interest rates. At the moment, interest rates are crucifying not only the house buyer but anybody with an overdraft, anybody who wants to invest and the whole economy. It is wrong that the economy should be crippled by interest rates. Why have our interest rates been increased to a level well over twice that prevailing in West Germany, our major industrial competitor? We already run a deficit on manufactured trade of £5,000 million a year with West Germany. We are becoming an industrial colony of West Germany and we are making that situation worse by keeping the pound overvalued against the deutschmark and crippling our industry with high interest rates.

The expansion must be triggered by public spending and sustained by low interest rates and a competitive pound. That is the only way to stop the decline which is now going on into a bitter, divided society, characterised by the kind of industrial war that the Prime Minister has triggered off in the mining industry. More important, that is the only way to rebuild the economic and industrial strength of this country which has been so wilfully thrown away by this wasteful Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation. I appeal for the co-operation of hon. Members.

7.10 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I shall not take up the comments of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), though I shall be referring to local government expenditure.

I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on his maiden speech. I share his doubts about the value of an autumn statement, because last year's statement turned out to be a PR man's El Dorado; hon. Members have been bombarded ever since with the fears of constituents and others about what might finally appear in the Budget.

I have wholeheartedly supported the Government in their objectives of bringing down inflation, encouraging

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and modernising industry and creating the ability for us to compete in world markets. Achieving those aims, particularly given the position in which we found ourselves in 1979, has called for firm policies and a courageous Government to carry them out.

It is significant that the country understood the difficulties and continued to support the Government. However, the success of those policies has been delayed and we must show that what we are doing is not only essential, but is producing the results that were promised to the country.

The chief reason for the delay in the success of the operations is the miners' strike. The effects of that strike have been tragic for the British people. The strike has affected their attitude towards the Government's policies and, much more important, it has had serious effects on the industries connected with mining.

What would have happened if we had had, to take the figure quoted by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), £3·5 billion available for construction work and the creation of new businesses and new jobs — in other words, money for something creative, rather than the preservative emergency measures that we have had to take in the past year? The Government's policies are succeeding, but they would have been more clearly seen to be succeeding if that money could have been used profitably in the past year.

I disagree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby that we would have been wise to follow the American example. The United States' difficulties are growing and it has advantages, particularly advantages of size, which we cannot match. Above all, the United States has sufficient strength to ensure that when the difficulties come, the rest of the world will share them. Again, we cannot do that. We must make sure that we get our policy right.

Having expressed my general support for what the Government are seeking to do, I hope that the Government will note my anxiety about one aspect of their policy. As we have a strong policy, we must make sure that we fully understand its effect and the problems that it is trying to solve. We must monitor that policy and be prepared to change it as circumstances change.

Let me give two examples. I take both from periods of Conservative Government, because I cannot see in the period 1974-79 any continuation of carefully thought out policies, only a series of emergencies, with frantic policies to put a finger in the dam. In 1970, it was felt that we should expand our business activity. We duly primed the pump and the policy was effective. However, there was a longer time lag than had been expected and the policy was, unnecessarily and unwisely, continued. Had that time lag been recognised — and we must carefully examine the effects of our policies — the over-priming of the economy would not have taken place.

In 1979, we faced the serious problem of inflation. The Government took determined and effective action. High interest rates and credit restrictions were quickly effective in the private sector, but not in the public sector. A true reading of that situation was that while high interest rates were effective in the private sector, political considerations were the dominant factors in public sector borrowing and spending. As a result, the private sector was squeezed for too long and considerable damage was don of our industries, including the textile industry engaged in exports.

What I am saying is that policies and definit continually be matched against the changing f leads me directly to the public sector requirement. To listen to some people, one wo that the Government are refusing to invest anything. That is not the case. We are investing l in the public sector. It looks as though capital overall will probably have been a record in 198 of that was in public sector investment.

However, there must be a discipline within Government have to operate and, within that d there has to be a limit to the PSBR. My concern i the present definition of public sector borrowing be re-examined. Different situations may demand solutions.

For example, if credit is tight and both the pr public sectors are being restrained, a simple defini suffice. However, if there is no monetary squee private sector, the definition of the public secto conditions applying to it need careful exami unnecessary damage is not to be done.

I appreciate that this is a difficult area and I easy solutions to offer. However, I believe that it i which must be examined continually, particular present time. Obviously, privatisation provides an because it takes an undertaking into the disciplin market place.

I particularly noted a comment made during th debate on water authorities. It was said, "What difficulties, we will look at switching the water au into the private sector, and that will ease the pro they will no longer fall within the public bo sector." But those water authorities would operating within the economy as a whole. It wou to me that one cannot argue that there is a case for treatment and for different limitations just because moves from one sector to the other unde circumstances. For other investments within the sector——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. ask the hon. Gentleman to come rapidly to a conc

Sir Michael Shaw: I hope that my right ho learned Friend the Chief Secretary will continue at the definitions that I have outlined, and that his will have the success that they deserve.

7.20 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): other hon. Members on both sides of the House in tribute to the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgat Portillo), who made his maiden speech today. He ce added to the quality of today's debate, and w undoubted expertise, I am sure that he will con considerably to the quality of our debates on all ec matters.

This debate on public expenditure should be th important of the financial year, and should be th attended, but the attendance on both sides of the H a grave disappointment, especially as public expe lies at the very heart of Government policy and difference in the political policies of the Governme

the official Opposition. The Government believe that a reduction in public expenditure will suppress inflation, will lead to industry becoming more competitive and will thus lead to jobs. It is true that the Government have suppressed inflation—it is the one thing to which they can lay claim—but they have yet to deliver any of the benefits which they have claimed, during the past few years, would flow from that.

We believe exactly the opposite, that an expansion of public expenditure will lead not only to a growth in the number of jobs but to industry becoming more competitive as investment goes into research, plant and machinery. Those are all areas which the Government are foolishly and gravely neglecting. Such an expansion in public expenditure would also have the added benefit of improving the quality of life for all our people.

As a contribution to that debate, this White Paper is not a success. On the very day that it was published the Opposition's great friends, the *Financial Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* described it as "wishful thinking", "shoddy" and "misleading". The Chief Secretary smiles, but he received similar treatment at the hands of the Select Committee, albeit in terms of the all-party eloquence and politeness for which it is famed. He and his officials had a fairly rough time when giving evidence, and had an even rougher time, albeit in Select Committee-ese, in that Committee's report.

Interestingly enough, the Chief Secretary dwelt on the whole question of capital spending and infrastructure. He rightly said that "infrastructure" was becoming something of a cliché, that there were many generalised protestations about the infrastructure, and that very little analysis was made of where the infrastructure was weak and of the effects of investment on different parts of the infrastructure, particularly with regard to employment.

I shall concentrate on one area, Stoke-on-Trent, which I have the privilege to represent. I shall try to see what effect investment in the infrastructure might have on that community, on services and on the quality of life on those who live in that city. Wherever one looks in Stoke-on-Trent, one sees the infrastructure in decay—1·5 million sq ft of empty industrial buildings, two thirds of which were built before the second world war, and spoiled land that needs reclaiming, even though our city has the best record of land reclamation and consistently won European awards for that during the 1960s and 1970s. Large tracts of land still need reclaiming, and the building costs on that land are £60 a square metre higher than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Wherever one looks in Stoke-on-Trent, one sees old houses. The need for infrastructure investment is obvious to everyone. In Stoke-on-Trent "infrastructure" is not a cliché or jargon, but a physical necessity for the life of industry in that city and for the people who live there.

In looking at the problems, I have been aided by an interesting book, which I commend to the Chief Secretary. However, I suspect that he has seen it. It was published last October by the Policy Studies Institute and is called "Rebuilding the Infrastructure". It makes a detailed study of three areas—Teesside, Southampton and Fareham, and Stoke-on-Trent. It makes horrifying reading with regard to all three areas. Stoke-on-Trent has 26,000 houses which were built before 1914. Furthermore, 10,000 of them are unfit or substandard. We have 30,000 houses in the local authority sector, 8,000 of which were built before 1939. Many of them do not have inside toilets or separate bathrooms, and many need rewiring and central heating. On any estate in my constituency one can see that putty is missing from windows, that there are broken downpipes and that there is often no lead flashing.

For the people of Stoke-on-Trent, the infrastructure lies at the heart of their lives. Last year, but 150 units were built in the public sector. That was the response, not because the local authority is unwilling, and not because there is a lack of finance—the local authority has £1 million of capital receipts which it would love to spend on public sector housing—but because the Government say that the money cannot be spent in that area. Is that really what the Chief Secretary wants to say to the country and to local authorities? Is he really saying that, however bad their housing and however manifest their needs, the money shall not be spent? That is the effect of the Government's policy, and that can be shown by the Government's figures, which are to be found in table 371, where the spend on housing is shown to have fallen from £4,522 million to £2,290 million.

Wherever one looks at the infrastructure—at health, highways, sewerage, land reclamation, urban renewal, education, the social services and particularly industrial building—the same story is told. There is a desperate need, and the Policy Studies Institute has come to the conclusion that £20 million a year needs to be spent for each of the next 15 years to get us to a reasonable standard of living. The need is there, and that is not a political, fantastic or irresponsible view, but a view that says that money should be spent on the detailed infrastructure and capital services of our city.

The Government will not invest and will not even allow local authorities to invest their own money. If the Government's solution to Stoke-on-Trent's problems is that the private sector should invest, I must tell the Chief Secretary that it is not investing in those areas of the economy. Private sector investment is undoubtedly going on in the pottery industry and in some of our manufacturing industries, but investment is not being made in, for example, housing, land reclamation and new industrial building. The private sector alone cannot cope. There must be co-operation between the public and private sectors. The only solution to the problems presented by the squeeze on capital expenditure and by the White Paper is a totally new deal for local authorities and a new deal and spirit of co-operation between local authorities and local institutions, such as banks and pension funds, so that new competitive energy can be injected into investment in the public sector and into the infrastructure of cities such as Stoke-on-Trent. Nothing less than that will do.

If we are to give local authorities that role, and if we are to give the private sector an opportunity to play a part with the local authorities, there must be local planning. There must be planning agreements so that the skills are there to implement the sort of detailed infrastructure development that I envisage.

The White Paper simply will not do. It expresses the intention to continue squeezing public expenditure, in spite of advice from the Government's friends in the CBI and the British Institute of Management, and in spite of all the evidence. The Government are fooling themselves. Investment in research and microtechnology in West Germany and France is two or three times greater than it is in the United Kingdom. Nobody believes that the White Paper even begins to address the problem of dereliction,

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under-investment and the challenges of the future which the country presents to the Government, but to which the Government refuse to rise.

7.30 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) treated us to a good constituency speech on why his constituency should receive more money. His authority can spend 20 per cent., or £2·4 million, of its £12 million. It is, therefore, unfair and untrue to say that it is not allowed to spend its own money.

Opposition Members talk about the public sector borrowing requirement and overspending as if they do not matter. They suggest throwing money at every difficulty. That has been tried in France recently and we know what happened there. It is no good trying to compare our economy with that of the United States. The troubles for the American economy are growing daily. Mr. Paul Volcker knows that.

The control of public expenditure troubles some of my right hon. and hon. Friends. We all agree about the need to control it, but we fall out over the specifics. That is when the trouble starts. I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that when we took office public expenditure was about 39·5 per cent. of GDP and that next year it will be about 41 per cent. of GDP. We want to bring that figure down.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and his Committee on reporting with such speed so that we can use today the information that he and his colleagues have so carefully sifted. I agree that we must do something about the presentation of our national accounts. To say that total expenditure this year will be £132·1 billion and not include interest is ridiculous. The interest should be included.

Many of us would also like a detailed investigation into what can legitimately be considered as capital expenditure. That should be taken out of revenue and presented to Parliament. The overall figure for overspending will be the same, but we should then be able to differentiate between pure current expenditure and capital exependiture. In that capital expenditure account I should like capital sales to be included.

Has a reserve been made for the increased Government liability on index-linked bonds issued since their introduction? I understand that only 2 per cent. or 2½ per cent. of an index-linked bond with a 2 per cent. or 2½ per cent. coupon is included in public sector borrowing accounts. The inflationary element is not taken into account. I hope that the Minister can give a firm answer about that. Where, if anywhere, does the inflationary element of an indexed-linked bond appear in our national accounts?

Of course we must have detailed control of all spending. I have long been an advocate of a Treasury watchdog in every Department. I say this in kindness to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary because he has an awful job each autumn trying to balance the books, to keep the peace and to retain friendships with Ministers. The Treasury should operate like any other large organisation and put a financial director into every subsidiary—or Department.

I welcome the White Paper's comments about fewer civil servants. However, I am worried about the increase in employment in the Health Service and other public sectors. I welcome the investigation being carried out by the Secretary of State for Social Services. My information is that the Secretary of State has appointed 12 area managers who will be in complete control. I am worried because 11 of the 12 have been recruited from within the Health Service and only one from outside. I thought that the idea was to inject more business and administrative expertise into the Health Service.

In the White Paper next year it might be a good idea to include comparative mapower totals for each of the Departments so that we can judge from where the increase in manpower has come. My fear, which is shared by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, is that too many administrators exist and too few people serve the public directly. We spend about 43 per cent. of our total expenditure on the Health Service and social security. That must be examined.

In the next year or so we must investigate earnings-related pensions. They are a contingent liability which might become insupportable for the taxpayer in the next 10 to 15 years. The Government must do everything possible to encourage private and occupational pensions. It would be ridiculous to tax pension schemes or funds in the next Budget because that could push more and more people on to the state system. Of the 9 million state pensioners, about 1·6 million receive supplementary benefit.

If the occupational pensions industry goes down, more and more employers will contract back into the state scheme, more and more employees will be dependent when they retire on the state pension and more and more people will need supplementary benefit. There is a huge contingent liability for the future generation of taxpayers.

I shall not rehearse the Opposition's deplorable financial history when they looked after our finances. Let us not make party points—*[Interruption.]* At least, we should not make them so patently. The Labour Government went to the IMF. They seemed to like going to the IMF and the World Bank. Their gross, incompetent handling of our financial administration made them go to the IMF.

I remind Labour Members that in the last five or six years our overseas investment has increased tremendously —by far more than we have received from North sea oil —and it is clear that no investment in this country has ever gone short of money if it has been a profitable enterprise. Nor should they forget that the investment that we make abroad is all profitable. It brings in not only dividends but export orders as well.

Labour Members have a bit of a nerve in tabling an amendment such as that which is before the House. It is clear from the Conservative record of the past few years that we have weathered the recession, GDP is up, real incomes are up, inflation is down, overspending has been reduced, social security benefits in real terms have increased, the rate of owner-occupation has gone up by nearly 2 million people, and nearly 2 million people are new share owners.

We need more control of public expenditure, but I urge the Government not to change their economic strategy because it is clear that it is working.

7.42 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I hesitate to comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) because when he described as deplorable the economic situation that the Government had inherited, I thought that he was talking about the situation that faced the incoming Labour Government of 1974. That Government inherited a massive balance of payments deficit, rising unemployment, increasing inflation and a miners' strike. We had the suspicion then —I believe that it has since been confirmed—that the outgoing Heath Government had opted for an election knowing that had they waited another 18 months, the inflation, unemployment and balance of payments figures would have become apparent.

Sir William Clark: That is incorrect.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Member for Croydon, South says that I am wrong. I listened to him. I trust that he will listen to me.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of France and Spain with reference to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). The hon. Member for Croydon, South should know, from his knowledge of economics, that Spain and France face a difficulty that does not confront us. They have constraints on their balance of payments. They have the orthodox problems that confronted us in the 1960s and 1970s—balance of payments deficits—which we no longer have because of North sea oil. Therefore, his comparison between Britain and the Socialist Governments of Spain and France has nothing to do with ideology or doctrine, but simply with balance of payments constraints.

I am tempted to say that I shall miss the hon. Member for Croydon, South in the deliberations of the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill. Indeed, I am tempted to say that I shall miss the Chief Secretary, too. However, I had better not say that too loudly, lest one of the Whips hears me and puts me on that Standing Committee again this year; then again I might see the sun rise over the Thames after protracted deliberations of that Committee, as happened last year.

Whenever I listen to the Chief Secretary I am reminded of those immortal words of the American writer, Emerson:

"The louder he talked of his honour, the faster we counted the spoons."

The more the Chief Secretary speaks of financial rectitude, the more we count the cost in terms of higher unemployment.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman described his policy as representing prudent financial arrangements, being a sustainable level of public expenditure with a reduction in the level of public borrowing. He said that the health and social services programmes would be maintained in broad terms.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not have any kind words for the heads of nationalised industries and those who work in those industries. He said that total external financing of the nationalised industries should fall from 1984-85 through to 1987-88, and we know what such a fall means for those who work in those industries. Those people are entitled to know whether the Government intend to drain the nationalised industries of finance and whether that drain will result in more jobs being lost in the public sector. Will the people in those industries have job security or will that, too, be destroyed?

The Chief Secretary perceives the role of the nationalised industries entirely in financial terms. That is the cause of many of the troubles facing the Government. They deal only in financial terms. Indeed, as I listened to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I heard echoes of Neville Chamberlain making the same sort of statements in the 1930s.

The Chief Secretary asked the non-rhetorical question: what return can we expect on the enormous investment in the public sector? That kind of thinking gave us the miners' strike. The right hon. and learned Gentleman pointed out that the private sector invested and expected a return. My hon. Friends and I believe in a social as well as a financial obligation. In our view, the two can be married for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman poured scorn on the idea of increasing investment for infrastructure purposes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central pointed out, a Policy Studies Institute document referred to the infrastructure problems that we have on Teesside. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) will, I am sure, develop that point if he has an opportunity to speak in the debate.

As a former Newcastle city councillor, I know that throughout the northern region we desperately need to repair school buildings, for example, that have steadily deteriorated since 1979, being the first casualty of Conservative Government cuts. Many houses need renovating; we must provide appropriate lighting and security in blocks of flats which lack both; and we must cure dampness in many houses. That work, together with repairing the roads, will require infrastructure investment of perhaps £350 million. By spending that money, we will improve facilities for school children, for the tenants of council houses and for users of the roads. But all that money will go into the local economy for the benefit of the people.

In Middlesbrough, almost every family I visit has an unemployed teenager. Those teenagers would benefit from a different orientation of the Government's public expenditure plans as laid out in the White Paper. They would, of course, benefit enormously from a £350 million investment programme in the local economy.

The Chief Secretary referred to lower unit costs in the administration of social security. Although he boasted proudly about that, he did not carry his financial logic much further; otherwise he would have referred to the delays that have become apparent at the sharp end of social security. He might, for example, have referred to the recipients who wait in the queues, and those who find themselves entangled more and more in bureaucratic red tape. I am sure that they will be pleased to know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has lowered unit costs in social security.

The Chief Secretary explained how local government expenditure had risen by 10 per cent. in cost terms since 1979 and how, since 1979, manpower had fallen by 4 per cent. But how has the Government's manipulation of public expenditure affected, for example, council housing? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) pointed out, when the last Labour Government left office, 264,000 starts had been made in public and private housing. That figure is now down to 190,000.

In my constituency, as the result of Government policy and financial constraint, there will be no new council

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house starts this year. That can only mean longer waiting lists and longer waits on those lists for those in urgent need of public housing, all building up the sense of frustration in the local community.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman paid scant attention to the medium term financial strategy of the Government. He referred to it in passing by saying that MTFS gave rise to "a range of uncertainty". After five years of MTFS, we have that admission from him before he hurries on.

The MTFS cannot achieve the aims that it sets itself. It cannot achieve a lower rate of inflation at the same time as creating more jobs in the economy. It cannot and has not created sustainable growth. We are asked many times by Conservative Members, "What would you do if you were in government?" If we were in government, we would not try to do the things that the present Government are attempting. When we get hold of the economy—we shall do so because the tide will turn against the Government—we shall increase public expenditure to an extent that is consistent with the needs of the economy and the investment plans of a Labour Government. We shall take into account the money that we shall get back through the imposition of appropriate exchange controls and the growth rate that we expect to achieve.

The Government are running into serious difficulties, and those difficulties are compounded by the White Paper. The Government are running into trouble, and that is not because their presentation is wrong, because they are incompetent or because they are inefficient. It may be that the Government are all those things, and I am sure that my colleagues would concur. But the Government are failing because their policies are wrong. Therefore, no amount of competence, efficiency or presentation, to which the hon. Member for Croydon, South referred, will save them. As the Chief Secretary said, time moves on. When time moves on for the Government, it will move them out.

7.52 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I add my congratulations to those already expressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on a most impressive and interesting maiden speech. As an old friend and colleague of my hon. Friend, it gave me particular pleasure to hear him and to note the warm reception which he was given in the Chamber.

It is an inexhaustible pastime for those who are that way disposed to pore over the tables and the small print of the public expenditure White Paper and its predecessor documents, to compare one with another and to deduce, according to taste, that the Government are continuing with their doctrinaire and heartless massacre of the public services or that they are feebly failing to control public expenditure.

For my part I believe that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has made some shrewd points about the shifts to which the Treasury has been put to maintain the appearance of keeping to the Government's planning total. That is useful for all concerned. If my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury have one anxiety, it is surely that there are too many people, participants in the political market place if not the financial market place, who believe that there is scope for a significant relaxation in our public finances.

We have seen two characteristic instances of this in recent days. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was reported in the weekend press as calling for increases in social benefits and in public sector capital spending. As this afternoon, he declined to set a cost to this programme and its consequences. In his heroic style, he simply insisted on nothing less than substantial, nay massive, increases.

The leaders of the alliance parties are more exact, or perhaps more naive. They unveiled on Friday their mock Budget, which featured a demand for reflation amounting to £4 billion. They claim that by waving this wand, or starting the printing presses, unemployment will be reduced by 500,000. In the formulation of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), this will be done without triggering high inflation. As the alliance parties acknowledge that the consequence of their policies would be to increase inflation to 6·9 per cent., it would be interesting to know whether the right hon. Member for Devonport or his colleague, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) regards inflation of 6·9 per cent. as low or even acceptable. The unease of alliance spokesmen is betrayed by their suggestion that any awkward consequences of their policies can be averted by the devices of full membership of the European monetary system and the institution of a two-tier scheme of interest rates.

There are many reasons for the relative economic failure of Britain. One of the reasons is what I might call the Wilsonian assumption, of which hon. Members of the SDP are the primary legatees, that economic policy is a matter of ingenious wheezes. Another reason is that public expenditure has been allowed to take far too large a proportion of our national wealth.

During the period of Conservative Government in the 1950s, when public expenditure accounted for a third or less of GDP, Britain became rapidly more prosperous. Those were the days when a Tory Chancellor of the Excechequer, Lord Thorneycroft, could resign on the issue of a £50 million excess over the planning total. Now we have an interesting dispute between the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary over whether public expenditure is or is not £17 billion above what it was planned to be.

The precise extent of the overspend is far less important than the necessity for an unblinking recognition that public expenditure has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished. The Government used to say that it should be diminished absolutely. With the 1982 White Paper, the Government said that public expenditure should be reduced as a proportion of GDP. The reality is that since 1982 even that has not happened. It is projected in this White Paper that by 1987-88, after two terms of Tory Government—these are the Government's assumptions, which represent a considerable assertion of hope over experience—public expenditure will be back to 39·5 per cent. of GDP. We shall be back at square one, where we began in 1979. Public expenditure at 39·5 per cent. of GDP, let alone the 41 per cent. as postulated for 1985-86 in the White Paper, is ruinously high.

It is not that there is any precisely quantifiable and predictable causal connection between a particular planning total and the PSBR and the indices of interest rates, sterling and so forth, by which we are so mesmerised. It is that with public expenditure in the region

of 40 per cent. of GDP we are in a realm of high taxes, high interest rates, endemic inflation and appallingly high unemployment. This is a stifling, unhappy and degenerative condition.

The condition is degenerative because the public sector cost of alleviating the evils of inflation, poverty and unemployment, which are themselves the consequences of an excessively burdensome state, compound the problem. Week by week, Members of Parliament capitulate a thousand times to local special pleadings—the retention of an uneconomic pit or an uneconomic maternity home here, an extra bypass or an extra leisure centre to be squeezed into a programme there. Week by week the organised lobbies become more importunate. The word processors grind and churn out letters to every one of us. They churn again to produce letters to our constituents urging them to write to us to complain about cuts and to ask for additional spending. All the time the onward momentum of indexed benefits and subsidies exerts upward pressure for increases in taxes, interest rates and inflation. The public sector grows, but the resources which are in the public sector, because they are not subject to market disciplines, are used relatively inefficiently. The result is that we proceed further into economic debilitation, competitive failure and unemployment.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary reflected mournfully in his evidence to the Select Committee, and again this afternoon, that over 20 years the average annual increase in public spending was 3 per cent. He was hardly more cheerful when he observed that since 1979, since the Conservative Government have been in office, it has been 1·5 per cent. The Select Committee argues that the average has been maintained at 3 per cent. even over that period.

In his evidence to the Select Committee my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary also alluded to last year's Green Paper on public expenditure and taxation into the 1990s. It was intended to outline options and to initiate debate for the future. Irrespective of whether the Green Paper provides the text, we need urgently a debate on the future pattern of public expenditure.

Broadly, there are two options. One option is to stagnate in a state-dominated and increasingly feeble economy. The other option is to embark on a systematic strategy to limit the role of the state to those functions which are necessary and which only it can undertake. The second strategy, which is the one that we should adopt, would mean that the state would concentrate on doing what it has to do and doing it better than it does now. It should concentrate on the relief of poverty, the maintenance of the security of the realm — law and order, defence and the promotion of Britain's interests abroad. It would concentrate on maintaining in proper condition the institutions of justice and of capitalism. It would concentrate on ensuring the proper provision of infrastructure and basic utilities.

The state would do all those things better than it does now, and the state should progressively withdraw from functions which it should never have undertaken. In particular, it should cease to pay out subsidies other than to the poor. In the White Paper, £5·6 billion is earmarked for subsidies to agriculture, industry, transport, the arts and so on. Subsidies force up prices, distort decision-making, and generate political clients whose demands are insatiable. We should have a determined programme to get rid of such subsidies.

Time does not permit me to elaborate upon the programme of withdrawal that I would like to see. In conclusion, I would only say that the Conservative party must give much fuller support to my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury. I do not believe that, with the array of pressures to increase public expenditure as they are, it will prove possible to hold public spending constant in real terms. We therefore need to develop a more confident debate and a more ambitious programme than is set out in the White Paper.

8.1 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I have listened with interest to the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), but I found no justification for his view that public expenditure is inherently bad and leads to low productivity, low economic growth, and higher levels of unemployment and inflation. The hon. Gentleman also believes that if public spending were cut substantially and if everything were left in the hands of the private sector, the whole picture would be rosy. Inflation and unemployment figures would be low, there would be rapid growth, and all our aims would be achieved simply through the operation of market forces.

In this country, as in others, the Government and the private sector—the Government and the markets—must work together. Ideally, they should not conflict with one another but should work together as far as possible. The Government should work with the grain of the market, as Governments in countries such as Japan and Germany, which have been so successful and have outperformed our industry year in and year out, have done so successfully over the past 30 years. The hon. Gentleman provided no evidence that there was any basis for his views in fact or in the experience of other countries.

The Select Committee's report has shown that in their expenditure and other financial White Papers the Government are working on back-of-the-envelope figures. To present the Government figures as though they were the precise calculations on which companies and other institutions operate is to give a grossly misleading impression. If the Select Committee report and today's debate help to persuade the Government to improve the figures given in the White Papers that are published for the information of the public and of the House, so that decisions can be taken on a more rational basis, that will be a change to be welcomed.

We have heard that debt interest — a substantial amount of expenditure for the Government — is not included in planning figures because it cannot be controlled. That fact illustrates my point. Capital assets, capital formation and capital depreciation are not quantified in any way. That shows how farcical it is for the Government to attack their critics by saying that capital expenditure is not important or that it does not have beneficial consequences. That argument is futile, because it is clear that the Government are working with guesstimates just as much as anyone else. They do not have the figures that would enable them to work in a serious and sensible manner.

This is an area of guesstimates but above all, it is an area of politics and political priorities. That is how we should consider the White Paper.

The cuts in the capital expenditure programme—I am pleased that the figures appeared in the White Paper—are deeply disappointing and should be reversed. If the

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defence figures are excluded from the capital expenditure programme, there are to be cuts of some £700 million in real terms this year, £1·4 billion next year, £600 million in the following year and another £600 million in the year after that—a total cut in capital expenditure over that period of £3·3 billion in real terms. The defence figures show a slight increase over the same period, so the true figure is even worse.

That is the last treatment that the country should be subjected to over the next few years. As capital assets are sold and as the revenues from North Sea oil diminish, we should be investing more in capital assets rather than cutting back as is suggested in the expenditure White Paper. There is considerable doubt whether the Government will be able to contain their expenditure in programmes such as defence. There is also considerable doubt whether the 3 per cent. public sector pay assumption will be meaningful. It is difficult to see how the Government will be able to achieve even the figures laid out in the White Paper.

That is a major criticism of the Government's strategy, which has rightly been criticised across the political spectrum, by Government Back Benchers as well as organisations representing different parts of the political and industrial spectrum. I hope that the Government will respond to that criticism at some stage and restore some of the cuts imposed on capital expenditure in the White Paper.

The alliance wants an increase in Budget expenditure in order to encourage the economy to grow even more rapidly, to get people back to work and to alleviate poverty. There should be a cut of 1 per cent. in the employer's contribution to national insurance, in order to encourage firms to take on more labour and to help to make firms more competitive. Capital expenditure should be increased by some £1 billion in order, in particular, to restore jobs in the construction industry and to ensure that more imports are not drawn into the country, making our balance of payments problems even worse than they are now, despite the export of North Sea oil.

Current expenditure should be expanded in order to help those who are suffering the most severe poverty. The family income supplement should be substantially increased, and long-term supplementary benefit should be extended to the long-term unemployed. The heating addition to supplementary benefit should be restored and the youth training scheme should be doubled in length, from one year to two. The community programme should be substantially expanded. The number of places on that programme should be increased from 130,000 to 250,000 so that people can be found work immediately and in a cost-effective way. All of that adds up to a programme involving an increase in public expenditure of some £4 billion more than the Government are suggesting. It implies a net increase in the PSBR of £2 billion, but we think that a reasonable increase. The PSBR would grow to only 2·6 per cent. of gross domestic product—hardly a fantastic figure as compared with other Western countries. The economy could stand that without a massive increase in inflation.

The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon criticised us for saying that we are prepared to accept an increase in inflation to 6·9 per cent. We believe that that is a modest price to pay for a decrease in unemployment. He might be prepared to tolerate the present level of unemployment into the foreseeable future, but we are not. We are prepared to accept a modest increase in inflation to get some people back to work and to start the growth which could get more people back to work. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not go away thinking that we favour rampant inflation. The programme that we published on Friday of last week, and all the runs through the model, show that we have chosen a combination of policies that will not increase inflation substantially but will nevertheless start getting people back to work and the economy on the move, thus giving some hope to those who have suffered for the past six years.

8.11 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I should like to put my remarks on the White Paper into the context of trying to solve the problem of mass unemployment. In many respects, the Government's economic policy has had considerable success. Inflation is down to 5 per cent. and appears to be steady, the economy is growing at about 3 per cent. and new jobs are being created at a rate of about 25,000 a month. The problem that overshadows all of that is that unemployment is not falling. Unless it starts to fall soon, we shall face a social problem that might take a generation to cure and risk losing the present widespread support for the Government's economic strategy.

People outside the rarefied atmosphere of politics and economics are not much interested in the level of the public sector borrowing requirement, money supply or total public expenditure. They are interested in the real economy of unemployment, inflation and living standards. The statistical measures to which we pay much attention are vital tools in analysing what is happening in the economy and they help to construct policy, but they are not ends in themselves. We are in danger of constructing a statistical straitjacket which leaves little, if any, room for fiscal manoeuvre.

The level of the PSBR does not tell us anything about what is happening in the economy. It has become important because the Government have promoted it as a measure of their success or otherwise in economic policy. I am not suggesting that the level of public borrowing is unimportant, but PSBR targets have tended to concentrate attention on the arithmetical difference between revenue and expenditure while often ignoring the different economic effects of different items of taxation and spending. Those qualitative differences in fiscal policy have a far more important effect on the economy than the total of the PSBR. Similarly, concentration on public expenditure totals seems to imply that all types of spending have the same effect, when we all know that that is not so. We know that spending on a capital project, such as the M25, which reduces private sector industrial costs, is not the same as paying higher wages to public sector employees. Such distinctions tend to be forgotten when we concentrate on the total.

Although the PSBR and public spending totals are important, their detailed composition is far more important. There is no correct level for the PSBR. It is projected to be 2 per cent. of GDP next year. That is arguably low. The effect of the current level of unemployment on the PSBR is about £15 billion. If we could halve unemployment, the PSBR would disappear. That seems to lead to the conclusion that it might be worth

having a modest short-term increase in the PSBR if it led in the longer term to lower unemployment and a considerably lower PSBR.

In a speech to the Zurich Society of Economists in 1981, my right hon. Friend the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, said:

"in a recession it would be wholly appropriate, and wholly consistent with declining monetary growth, for the PSBR to be allowed to rise above the medium-term trend line."

I should have thought that that was as good an authority for greater flexibility of the PSBR as one could get. It is vital that any extra borrowing is used to finance measures that directly promote growth and employment, but, subject to that caveat, a higher PSBR would give fiscal room for some form of job-creation package in the Budget.

Some people argue that increases in the PSBR lead automatically to increases in interest rates. The evidence is not on their side in regard to a modest increase in the PSBR. This year's overshoot of £1·25 billion did not lead to an increase in interest rates when it was announced in the autumn. The recent increase in interest rates has been due far more to what has happened in the United States and to money supply factors here. Some of those factors, such as the rate of domestic credit expansion, are, to a large extent, under our control, but many, such as oil prices and the level of American interest rates, are not. Whatever the causes of rises in interest rates, marginal differences in the level of the PSBR are not one of them. I doubt whether £2 billion either way on the PSBR makes as much difference to the level of domestic interest rates as a speech by Sheik Yamani on oil prices or another by Mr. Henry Kauffman on the prospects for American interest rates.

The commitment to no real growth in the total of public expenditure has led to concentration on the total at the expense of the components. As a result, the components tend to be treated the same. I accept that control of public spending is a vital factor in promoting growth. The idea that our economic problems can be solved by a massive increase in Government spending is dangerous nonsense. However, the control is needed in respect of those items of current spending which are in the nature of an overhead on the economy. In practice, it appears that current spending on most programmes has increased and the total has been kept in line by reducing capital spending and increasing asset sales. Qualitatively, we cannot balance increases in current spending against reductions in capital spending.

The Select Committee report shows that, during the past five years, current spending on goods and services has risen by 16 per cent. in real terms, that transfer payments have risen by 22 per cent. and that general Government fixed investment has fallen by 15 per cent. Capital spending is predicted to fall further during the next two or three years. That is a crude qualitative distinction of different types of public spending, and I do not mean to imply that all capital spending is good and that all current spending is bad. Nevertheless, that illustrates the qualitative effect that is disguised by concentrating on the total of public spending.

Last year's public expenditure White Paper showed capital spending remaining static in real terms. This year's shows a decline in real terms from £21·8 billion in 1983-84 to £18·5 billion in 1987-88. Those figures include defence capital spending, which I believe is not counted as capital spending in national accounts. Omitting defence spending, one discovers that, at 1983-84 prices, capital spending has fallen from £20 billion in 1978-79 to £16 billion this year —and it is predicted to fall to £13·5 billion in 1987-88. That is a fall of 20 per cent. during the past five years. If that trend is continued, capital spending will have fallen by one third from 1978-79 to 1987-88. That is an enormous reduction and shows how an apparently steady total can disguise widely different effect.

All items of public expenditure should be evaluated in terms of their effect on industrial costs, economic growth and employment. Those areas of public spending that do not have a beneficial effect should be tightly controlled to give scope to allow the beneficial items to be expanded, or at least not reduced.

I should like to draw those two points together by suggesting that we could have a slightly higher PSBR without an adverse effect on interest rates if the extra money were productively spent in pursuit of increased economic growth and employment. Tackling unemployment is surely now the overwhelming policy objective. If we settle for a PSBR of £10 billion with an implied £1·5 billion fiscal adjustment built into the autumn statement, the Chancellor would have £4·5 billion with which to finance a job creation package in the Budget by a combination of carefully targeted tax reductions and public spending increases. My preference is for cuts in employers' national insurance contributions, increased home improvement and urban renewal grants, more positive industrial and trade policies and changes in our education and training system. All those measures would help to create new employment in the private sector and enhance economic growth.

No hon. Member would pretend that we can create 3 million new jobs overnight, but it is important that we start to develop practical and imaginative policies to reduce unemployment. I have suggested a modest programme wholly consistent with the Government's overall economic strategy. Whatever we decide to do, it is important that we do not place ourselves in a statistical straitjacket of overall PSBR and spending targets which effectively allow us to do nothing.

8.21 pm

Mr. Peter Hordern (Horsham): The House has had some harmless amusement in poking fun at the public expenditure White Paper. I shall not continue that trend because I am sure that the points have already been well made. We have seen an acceptance over a long time that public expenditure programmes should remain more or less as they have been for some years. I do not believe that anyone is satisfied with that approach. I cannot find anyone who feels that the Government are spending enough on a particular programme. Although my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench take credit for controlling public expenditure — I applaud their efforts—they do not seem to be satisfying many people.

We are often told that we should follow the example of America, West Germany and Japan and examine the way in which public expenditure is a much smaller part of their gross domestic product. But if one follows the advice of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench one sees distinct differences between our pattern of expenditure and that of other countries.

I criticise the public expenditure White Paper because all the programmes appear to be set in concrete. Other countries do not spend money on public services in the way in which Britain does, in terms of current or capital

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expenditure. I believe that, even with the best will in the world, with all the financial management initiatives and the careful scrutiny of departmental programmes as carried on at the moment, we need something quite different. We need a wide-ranging review of the whole of public expenditure by the only people who can really do it—a Cabinet committee formed from the star chamber committee sitting for a long period and examining carefully whether we need to spend money in the way in which it has been habitually spent. We would find that other countries do not spend money in the way that we appear to find necessary.

We should establish our priorities, with one priority being the granting of supplementary benefit payments and subsidies only to low income earners or those with no support. Another should be that employment can best be secured by low taxes and competition.

I should have thought that it was generally agreed that it is a mistake to pay subsidies to millionaires; yet, year in, year out, we continue to pay large subsidies to cereal farmers. I believe that there is a good case for helping the small dairy farmers because they form the social fabric of the agricultural community. There is simply no case for subsidising cereal farmers.

There is no Department of Trade and Industry in the United States or West Germany. I believe that it would be better to amalgamate the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with the Department of Trade and Industry and call it "the Department of Ease and Comfort". Those Departments are in the same business of handing out subsidies unnecessarily. I understand that this year we have spent £627 million in regional grants and that that amount is due to be reduced next year to £401 million. That is pretty good, but it does not mean that I am against regional policy. I am certainly not against regional policy, but I believe that its objective would be better achieved by tax incentives than by indiscriminate grants.

The House has heard criticism of what would happen if the nationalised industries improved their balance sheets by increasing prices. They will certainly do that. I understand that we shall soon receive buff envelopes telling us that our water rates have increased by 10 per cent. There will be further increases of 10 per cent. during the next two years. The same is true of electricity prices. We are told that, on current cost accounting, the electricity authorities earn only 2·6 per cent. I believe that the electricity authorities would rightly say that they have been made to install machinery which they would not have chosen and they are still not permitted to import coal to make a proper return on their assets. Undoubtedly, higher charges and prices will feed through the economy in industrial costs, making imports more competitive, and in increases to the RPI, which will affect pensions and the cost of supplementary benefits. The net beneficial effect is likely to be much smaller than the Government would like.

So far the Government have achieved a good programme of sales of nationalised assets, but I believe that we should take it further. Ministers often use the analogy of what happens in the United States, Germany and Japan. If people in those countries were invited to nationalise the water, electricity and gas authorities, they would think that their Governments had taken leave of their senses, and they would be absolutely right. I believe that we should start to denationalise those larg institutions. If we privatised the gas, electricity and wate industries, we would receive about £27 billion, using th same analysis that applied to British Telecom. I do no suggest that we should privatise those industries all at onc —we should do so over a long period.

Privatisation would not only help the PSBR—that i a particularly desirable objective—but it would kee prices down, because denationalised industries would no need to increase their costs as much as the Treasur wishes. If one took a very conservative attitude, one woul reduce the national debt. That would cause a bit of a stir It has not been done for a long time. I do not suggest tha we should reduce the national debt, but if there were mor privatisation some of my hon. Friends' suggestions abou capital investment programmes in the public sector coul be properly followed.

From where will the money come? It will come fron the pension funds. Anyone noting the growth in recen years in pension funds would be astonished. In 1979, then was £40 billion in pension funds. I am told that there i now £120 billion. In 1979 the institutions managing th pension funds invested £900 million; this year they invested £6 billion. I do not believe that the pension funds in Britain would not support the buying of public utilities just as pension funds in other countries do. Think of the opportunity that would present for wider ownership. My right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench should be following those practical considerations. They would greatly ease the Government's path, and they would no be inflationary. There would be lower prices.

I suggest that such policy should be carefully considered. I disregard what the Opposition have said in their nitpicking criticisms of the Government. I notice tha they have been careful not to put forward their own policies. Perhaps that is just as well.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the steadfastness with which they have pursued their objectives. I hope that they succeed.

8.30 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): There speaks the soft south-east of England, where perhaps the populace do not depend to the same degree upon public expenditure as do my constituents and many constituents in the north, Scotland, Wales and even the midlands, for the provision of their most basic services. Public expenditure in the main, not entirely, is about providing services for people. If we cut them, the poor, the elderly, the disabled and the young are the hardest hit. It does not hit the well-off—those who live in the big, fat comfortable villas in Horsham; I have been there and I know it—but it does hit those who live in the tenement dwellings in Castlemilk in my constituency, who suffer as a result of the public expenditure cuts.

The hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) almost completely misunderstood what public expenditure is about and its relationship to private sector industry. His speech continued the Tory party's vendetta against public expenditure. I only hope that at the next general election —this has been increasingly true in Scotland for two elections—those who are employed in the public sector will turn against the Government and reject them completely. I hope that those employees will do that, not just because they are less well paid than they were or

because their standard of living has decreased, but because they are insulted and degraded by the Government, who treat them as parasites.

Anyone employed in the public sector is a parasite. Any teacher teaching in school, lecturer teaching in college, anyone working in direct works departments and social workers are parasites, because the Government consider, as does the hon. Member for Horsham, that public expenditure is wrong. That is all based on the myth that there are two separate sectors — the private and the public. That is not true. The private sector of industry depends more upon public expenditure and the Government expending money on it than the public sector depends upon the private sector to obtain money.

I wrote to Glasgow district council recently about repairs to a privately owned, privately rented tenement in Glasgow. It contains 10 flats, all of which are privately rented and owned by one landlord. The roof is about to collapse, the windows all need taking out and replacing and there is seepage from the brickwork because there is no proper damp course. The flats need to be properly repaired. Glasgow district council has inspected the flats, and it admits that it is almost prepared to put on a public sector order to have them repaired compulsorily. I received a letter from the council this morning, in which it says that it has no money for grants for that work.

I received a letter from the landlord of that tenement last week. I had pointed out that he had a responsibility to ensure that those repairs were carried out. His answer to me was:

> "Why do you not use your good offices to get us a 90 per cent. grant from the local authority to ensure that that work is carried out?"

That private landlord is refusing to do his job and carry out his responsibilities as a landlord to ensure that the house is water and wind tight because he cannot obtain public expenditure to subsidise him. He will continue to collect his rents. He will expect every tenant to pay rent. If they do not, he will evict them or try to have them evicted. Here we have a small business man—he is not a millionaire —being subsidised by public expenditure. That is true throughout the building industry.

Some time ago I met the Scottish Institution of Civil Engineers. It was complaining bitterly about Government capital expenditure cuts. That association correctly pointed out that it is entirely within the private sector. There are virtually no publicly owned civil engineering companies or organisations, yet 95 per cent. of the work that they do is paid for by the public purse. The Mossmorran petrochemical complex has just been opened in Scotland. The company building it received large amounts of regional grants and aid to build it. Even within the 5 per cent. of the remaining civil engineering work there is a great deal of public expenditure. The private sector of industry depends almost entirely upon public expenditure to survive. That is true of housing, civil engineering and large numbers of other undertakings.

Tourism comes within the Scottish Office budget. The Secretary of State for Scotland tells us time and time again how important it is that we should increase expenditure on tourism to attract more tourists to Scotland, but the tourist industry depends on public expenditure. The tourist board, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Office give grants to hotels and boarding houses and to those who wish to let their houses for self-catering holidays, but that is insufficient. Although we have had some lovely summers in Scotland, we cannot depend on the sun always being out, and if the weather is bad we rely on public services to provide leisure activities to give us a proper holiday. If they are not there, the tourists will not return.

The Burrell collection in Glasgow has now outpaced Edinburgh castle as the largest tourist attraction in Scotland, yet the Burrell collection nearly did not open because of the Government's refusal to give proper funds to Glasgow district council. The council nearly decided not to open the collection. That would have been an enormous loss to the Scottish tourist industry. That is true of parks, concert halls, subsidies paid to the Scottish National orchestra and many other things to which tourists are attracted for leisure activities. They are almost entirely paid for out of the public purse, yet the Government insist on making cuts.

Members who, like me, represent areas where unemployment is running at 30 to 35 per cent., and where youth unemployment is running at 60 to 65 per cent.— that is true of Castlemilk—have been horrified by the increase in heroin addiction and by the number of youngsters who are now taking hard drugs. The Government shed crocodile tears about it. I admit that they have recently put in sums of money to educate youngsters about drugs, but they have cut—the hon. Member for Horsham knows this as well as I do, because he was on the Public Accounts Committee that examined it — Customs and Excise staff by 3,500 since 1979. I am not saying that all the cuts have been in drug investigation. Of course they have not. However, as the number of staff dealing with VAT collection has been increased, it is arguable that there has been a cut of even more than 3,500 in other activities, including heroin and drug supervision, and attempts to stop it coming into the country.

Equally, there is no question but that one reason for the increase in heroin addiction is the despair, frustration and hopelessness that have been created among many of our youngsters in the areas of high unemployment. They feel that there is no hope and nothing for them to look forward to except unemployment. In the housing schemes, which are being increasingly run down, there are fewer facilities, because almost all are provided for out of public expenditure. Out of despair, these youngsters turn to heroin as at least some escape, some hope, some sort of dreamland in which, at least for a short while, their despair is dissipated. Yet much of that despair and frustration has been created by the Government's refusal to recognise that, at the very heart of our economy, the only way that the economy can move forward is by increasing public expenditure, investing in and repairing our infrastructure, and not, as the Government are doing increasingly, by cutting it back.

8.40 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): When the Government set out on their radical journey in 1979, a vital cornerstone of their policy was to cut public expenditure so that they could cut taxation and reduce the proportion of the gross domestic product taken by the public sector. The 1980 White Paper confirmed that intention and forecast that expenditure would drop through to 1983-84. We all know that the Government failed to meet their targets. In 1982 they abandoned their policy of reducing expenditure and adopted a policy of keeping expenditure broadly level in cost terms.

[Mr. John Townend]

This White Paper gives the House the opportunity of judging how successful the Government have been in keeping to that less ambitious policy. It is increasingly clear that the Government have failed yet again to achieve their objectives. Even on their own basis, chart 1.2 on the planning totals shows that in real terms those figures have risen in every year since 1979-80 and, in total over six years, by £10 billion. However, if one defines public expenditure along the lines of the Select Committee, and of most accountants, economists and business men, one has to make several adjustments, which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), such as the inclusion of debt interest, allowing for asset sales and making adjustments for the reduction in the national insurance surcharge. When one makes those adjustments, the situation is even worse. In four years, in real terms, public spending has increased by no less than £18 billion. That is 3 per cent. per annum in real terms. So much for the cuts that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) talks about. How I wish that there had been some real cuts in public spending.

Paragraph 20 of the Select Committee's report shows that after allowing for those adjustments, spending will be about £6 billion more in the current year than was planned in the 1983 White Paper. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State that many of the Government's problems stem from the fact that they have failed to achieve their spending targets and then, having failed to do so, they have tried to hide that fact by overemphasis on the planning totals, which do not show a true and fair view of the situation. By failing to cut spending, they have been unable to reduce taxation and we all agree that the burden on the low paid is far too high. By pretending that they are controlling expenditure, the Government have lost much support in many areas and from many bodies for their policy of endeavouring to do better in the future.

I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that if the Government came clean and admitted that they had failed to reduce public expenditure and, indeed, to control it, and that it had gone up every year roughly by 3 per cent. in real terms, that would convince more people of the need for further pressure on public spending and that public spending was too high.

In order to keep up the charade that spending is under control, the Government have made tremendous efforts to keep to their planning totals by what we in the Select Committee call creative accounting. Several of the Government's recent political problems have been caused by those efforts. I shall cite two examples. The first is restrictions on local authorities' rights to spend capital receipts and the second is setting new targets for water authorities. If the Government had dealt with departmental spending, especially in the Department of Health and Social Security, those politically sensitive measures would not have been necessary.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Townend: No, because I am short of time.

The Government are clearly hoping to do better in future and are proposing, compared with the upturn for this year to reduce spending in the coming year. The Chancellor must excuse me if I tell him that while I support him most strongly, I am slightly sceptical of his likely success for two reasons. First, the 3 per cent. wage increase, which is included in the White Paper, see low unless we get much more demanning in th sector than in the past. Secondly, the cost of the strike will be much greater next year than was anti

In my view, the only way that the Governm achieve their targets in the next few years is by co their pressure on spending. That means think unthinkable. First, we must tackle DHSS expe which is out of hand in some areas. If all the peo were entitled to benefits actually claimed them, would be horrendous. I should like to quote two ex Housing benefit replaced rent and rate allowa 1979-80 the cost was £278 million a year, but in financial year it will be no less than £2,800 milli Government must bear responsibility for much because they brought in housing benefit. I am s they never anticipated the number of people wh claim that benefit. It is not restricted to the real understand that about 12 million people collect second example is the board and lodging allowanc in 1979-80 started off at £62 million and has in almost tenfold in six years.

I welcome the DHSS reviews. The whole syste complicated, and spending in some areas is virtu of control. Most of the public are confused multitude of benefits and consequently often fail what they are entitled to. What we need is simpli a lower total cost. We shall need some form of ca on that heading. That will mean that in areas wh have no commitments, we shall have to end the au indexation of those benefits.

The need to restrain expenditure will grow revenues decline. There are several other areas should question over the coming years, such as the the EEC at nearly £1 billion a year. It does not seem are likely to get complete control of the c agricultural policy. It must be tackled. Until it is, I will not vote for an increase in the VAT contributi we really be able to afford Trident? As oil reve down, will we continue, year in year out, to spend £ on overseas aid, very little of which—only some cent. or 15 per cent.—goes on food or famine a the manning levels in the local authorities really to What about the efficiency of the National Health S What about considering bringing back the teach ratio to what is was when the Labour Governm office? That would save about £170 million in l alone. As we move towards the end of the centu declining oil revenues, can we really afford th earnings-related pension? I know that my right hon the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his colleague Treasury are making strenuous efforts, but often t fighting a losing battle with their colleagues in th spending Ministries. Many Conservative M strongly support the Treasury Ministers in their ef control spending. However, we shall continue to them when they fail to grasp the nettle in those area are out of control. In recent months the Governme seemed to be losing their sense of direction. We nc a return to the aims and optimism of 1979. That lower spending and significant reductions in taxatio are two vital ingredients for economic expansion creation of new jobs.

new jobs.

8.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I shall seek to make a brief and truncated speech. Overall, there are some welcome elements in the public expenditure White Paper, not least the fact that the overall total does not seem to be seriously out of control. I pay tribute to the Government for that. I am also glad to see that it has not been necessary during the past year to have a hasty mid-year adjustment, such as we saw in July 1983, which can be damaging. However, a great deal more can and should be done to increase output, efficiency and the performance of public spending. I shall dwell mostly on those aspects.

I also wish to make a procedural point. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who argued that it was preferable to find ways of debating both sides of the public accounts at the same time on a basis of comparable figures at an appropriate stage in the financial year. I hope that such a procedural change may be considered and made by the Treasury.

I have many constructive suggestions to make which arise from paragraph 16 of volume 1 of the public expenditure White Paper. It argues fairly that there are three ways of analysing public spending: where it goes —in other words the programmes; who spends it—the spending authorities; and in what form it is spent—in other words, 40 per cent. on transfer payments, 30 per cent. on public sector pay, 25 per cent. on goods and services, and 5 per cent. on public subsidies. A much more important fourth question, which was implicit in some speeches, but should have been more explicit in volume 1 of the public expenditure White Paper, is: what value do we get for the money we spend? That should commend itself to both sides of the House, if we consider these

To find answers to that vital fourth question we need to consider such things as policy priorities, economic efficiency, social benefits and opportunity costs. In future public expenditure White Papers I should like to see greater emphasis on those aspects. The Treasury documents should make them more explicit.

I shall give some examples because examples illustrate matters better than general statements. Could the Treasury justify the steep real increase in defence capital spending, which has been shown in table 1.13? Can we explain how and why the Export Credits Guarantee Department is supposed to have negative interest support costs by 1987-88, compared with the present position? Why is no attempt made to estimate the rate of return on rail electrification, for example, when road building is said to have a 74 per cent. positive rate of return?

As performance indicators suggest that first degrees in higher education have a real rate of return between 5 per cent. and 8 per cent., why is the participation rate in higher education being allowed to fall? As 11 per cent. of the cost of family practitioner services, but only 1 per cent. of the cost of hospital services, is recouped in charges, does it mean that one is too high, the other too low or both?

Why is no information given this year on the take-up of social benefits, as it was last year? Why is there so little discussion of the alternative economic costs of job-creating measures, when table 3.12.8 shows that each person taken off the unemployment register saves the Exchequer an average of £2,000 in social benefits? How is the increase in benefits to the unemployed to be held at 9 per cent. during the review period, when the total of unemployed is expected to remain above 3 million and inflation during the period is expected to be 14 per cent.?

How realistic is it to expect a 7 per cent. real cut in local authority expenditure in 1985-86, and have Ministers considered the consequences of achieving or failing to achieve such a change? Why are there no assessments published of the different rate of return on different investment projects in the nationalised industries?

In short, why has not the Treasury and the rest of Whitehall been required to emulate the excellent work done by the Department of Employment in table 3.4.10 on the relative cost effectiveness of various employment creating measures? That should be the model for all Departments, if we are serious about looking for value for money.

In bad economic times, public expenditure will tend to rise because of the costs of recession. In good economic times, it may also rise, but perhaps not so fast, because of rising public expectations. The difference is that in the latter case an advanced country with a sensible Government should be able to afford it. Indeed, the figures produced by Lord Kaldor and Terry Ward in *The Times* recently back that up. Whether the times are good or bad, the top priority must be to ensure that we get the best possible value from the large totals that are spent.

8.56 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the public expenditure White Paper because this debate is as important as the debate on the Budget in a few weeks' time. Often people overestimate the importance of the Budget debate and downgrade this debate.

In my constituency there will be grave anxiety that the proposals in the White Paper do nothing to deal with the unemployment problem and, indeed, will add to unemployment. That was clearly pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in his opening remarks. There will be no reduction in unemployment. In my constituency it was announced today that a further 200 people are to be made redundant at Lucas Aerospace, and obviously I am worried about that.

I was surprised when the hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) suggested that we should privatise public enterprises. That does nothing to help our country's problems, because, when the Government receive the money, they squander it on keeping people unemployed instead of providing work for them.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the water authorities. The North-West water authority faces some of the biggest problems of any water authority. Most of the waterworks are extremely old and need new mains and additional supplies. Most of the sewers were constructed before the turn of the century. In the city centre of Manchester one never knows in which direction one can travel because of the diversions caused by the collapse of the sewer system. Near the Mersey estuary every town until recently has been pumping sewerage into the river Mersey. That is a disgrace. Only recently the first treatment works were opened on that stretch of the Mersey. In the not too distant future there will also be sewage treatment for Liverpool. Work of that type must be tackled. When we speak of water authorities, we speak not only of water supply but of other aspects of the water industry which people tend

[Mr. Peter Pike]

to ignore. Many people often forget that the water industry also includes sewage. Although there may have been votes in water, there were never any votes in spending money on sewerage, yet that important problem must also be tackled.

Only last Wednesday, we debated the Government's decision in respect of local authority capital receipts and public expenditure. In my constituency, there are still council houses with bathrooms outside the back of the house. Yet, even in 1985, the council is unable to modernise them and provide people with the facilities that they need. More money is necessary if such work is to be undertaken. It is nonsense to limit capital receipts so that only 20 per cent. can be used for housing.

The Government claim to be the friends of the private sector. There was a housing grants bonanza before the general election, but the position has now changed and people are unable to obtain grants to improve or modernise their homes. In my constituency, many pre-1914 houses, and others built in the last century, are in urgent need of modernisation. These are good, stone-built terraced houses which lack basic amenities. Many of them have waste water toilets which depend on the tippler system, whereby waste water is discharged through the sink. People living in such conditions must be given grants to improve their homes.

My constituency has a town hall and many offices which, if in the private sector, would be condemned. In 1981, the council planned to build a town hall extension in an attempt to save money and to avoid rate penalties and the difficulties associated with curbs on revenue expenditure. Now that revenue restraint is so tight—with penalties, ratecapping, and so on—there is no justification for placing further restraints on capital spending which local authorities must take into account when considering revenue. Money should be spent on such things.

In many of our towns, street lighting has deteriorated and is no longer maintained. Many of our roads are pot-holed and pavements are no longer maintained to the same standard as before. Many parks no longer have flowerbeds, simply because councils do not have the money. Such amenities should be provided.

It is nonsense that in 1985 there should still be Health Service waiting lists. We should be developing the Health Service to allow for early diagnosis so that patients can be cured, but all too often an illness is discovered long after treatment is effective. That might cost money initially, but in the long run there would be a saving. Even if there were not, it would still be right because it would save pain and suffering.

There is also a need for residential accommodation for the elderly. The only growth area at present is the building of private residential homes which ordinary people cannot afford but must depend on simply because councils do not have sufficient resources to build such dwellings. Ironically, the private sector is supported by the DHSS, in that benefits are given to ordinary people who have to live in such dwellings. Consequently, that makes a profit for the private sector. We must provide residential homes for the elderly and sheltered homes for those who need them. Much more money should be spent on such projects. If the Government began putting money into such schemes, we would begin to get people back to work.

Most of my constituents believe that the review being carried out by the Secretary of State for Services are designed to cut benefits rather than to im efficiency. I was amazed to hear the suggestion th earnings-related pension scheme should be brought end. Why should ordinary people be unable to mai decent standard of living once they retire? Why they not have proper protection from the social and w state? Why should there be a death benefit of only That is now irrelevant and should be brought up to Why should the Christmas bonus amount to only That sum should be more realistic.

The Government's means of solving unemploym to ask people to take lower wages. We hear that tin again from Conservative Members. Such an a makes me weary, because millions of people do not average wage, but must cope on below average Even the average wage is very much inflated by sh premium payments for working unsocial hours going to work, for example, at 10 o'clock on a Sa or Sunday night as I had to do before I was ele Member of Parliament. It is no solution to ask peo accept low wages. I do not oppose the family i supplement, but I believe that it is a subsidy to thos pay low wages. We should look very carefully question and ensure that everybody is provided decent wages and living standards while they are at and also when they retire.

9.5 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): If the Hous forgive me, I shall not follow the hon. Memb Burnley (Mr. Pike) on his depressing tour of problems. All I would say to the hon. Gentleman the deprived groups of people to whom he referred enjoyed in the last six years the enormous benefi lower rate of inflation. May I also congratulate my Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Pe on the fluency and excellence of his maiden speec

This debate has raised a number of issues abo presentation of the White Paper. If next year my righ Friend could include, alongside the column which the estimated outturn for the current year, in thi 1984-85, the planning total for 1984-85 that was con in the previous year's White Paper, it would be th means of checking the controls between one yea another and would mean that we should not need t before us both White Papers.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham (Mr. Maples) in his concern about unemployment. decision that we make about public expenditure mus and foremost, be related to unemployment. A reduct the level of unemployment must now rank alongsi defence of the realm and the preservation of law and as one of the primary responsibilities of Governm the Government were to affirm that as their prior would enable other subsidiary aims—I stress subs aims—such as the reduction of inflation and the c of spending to be seen as a means to an end, the end lower unemployment.

It might be possible, as the Opposition have sug this evening on several occasions, to solv unemployment problem by a massive dose of spending. The Opposition have been very careful say how much they want to spend. They just want to a huge amount of money. At a cost of perhaps £25

or £30 billion many new jobs could no doubt be created, but we cannot afford to spend such a sum. Additional public expenditure on that scale would involve a huge increase in interest rates which, in real terms, are already dangerously high. A prolonged period of real interest rates in almost double figures would have an old-fashioned, deflationary impact on the economy which would eventually destroy jobs in the private sector.

Another reason why we cannot afford a huge increase in public expenditure is the cost of servicing the debt. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) has already pointed out, debt interest is already rising more quickly than any other component of public expenditure. It has risen by 148 per cent. since 1979-80 —from £3·5 billion to £8·5 billion. In the three years covered by the White Paper it is projected to rise faster than the spending of any single Government Department. This is a measure of the way in which debt interest is becoming a great burden on the British economy. The cost of servicing our debt now amounts to 6 per cent. of all Government receipts, as opposed to only 4 per cent. five years ago. It would be a reckless act to embark upon a spending programme of the size described by the Opposition which would impose a permanent and heavy burden of interest payments on future generations.

Having made that general point, I hope that the Government will not ignore what could be very favourable effects of showing some flexibility over the question of their spending total. An extra £1 billion, or even £2 billion, as was suggested earlier, would not have disastrous consequences for interest rates or for the total level of debt. Although it would not by itself solve the unemployment problem, it would be a welcome sign of the Government's determination to tackle this problem. Those who have jobs in relatively prosperous areas like my constituency of south Suffolk are just as anxious to see such a sign from the Government as those who are out of work. Indeed, it is my conviction that the concern of the privileged employed for the unemployed is now growing to such an extent that most of them would be willing to see further income tax cuts postponed if the revenues could be used to generate jobs. Extra expenditure on successful schemes such as the enterprise allowance scheme would be widely supported.

Let me touch briefly on some of the specific suggestions for expenditure savings. First, I support the reference made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) to EEC expenditure. Even after the stout effort made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, our expenditure is still running at £1 billion a year. Reference was also made, rightly, to Trident whose military usefulness is already being called into question and whose cost is well beyond what the country can afford. The cancellation of that project and the reduction in spending on the EEC would have no unfavourable employment implications.

With the social security reviews that are coming up the question of the state earnings related pension scheme arises. The country cannot afford the long-term cost of that and the sooner we face up to that the better. However, in that context I hope that we shall protect child benefit. If in the Budget we choose to raise tax thresholds—I hope that we do not because a far more effective form of relief for the economy would be through raising the lower earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions — let us not make the mistake that we made last year of failing to raise child benefit in line with the increase in thresholds.

There is one area of public expenditure in which I cannot advocate cuts; indeed, I must oppose the reductions already being put forward by the Government. It is deplorable that we should be reducing expenditure in the highly labour-intensive area of local authority housing. In doing so, we are penalising particularly severely just those local authorities that have been most successful in carrying out the Government's policies.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to refer to some of those points with others that have been raised earlier in the debate. If we concentrate our efforts on the reduction of unemployment we shall see that success brings its own rewards. As has been pointed out this evening, the cost of benefits paid to the unemployed over the past five years has risen from £1·5 billion to £6·5 billion, quite apart from the additional cost of lost revenue. I commend those points to my hon. Friend.

9.12 pm

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): In the brief time available I want to make one simple point. I want to concentrate specifically on public sector capital expenditure. In 1981, the National Economic Development Council considered, with representatives of the Treasury, the tests which would have to be met for the introduction of private sector capital into public sector projects.

In 1981 the Treasury representatives set out two tests which have been draconian in their effect. I can think of no example of private sector capital coming into public sector projects since 1981. The two tests were, first, that the private investor should not get an unfair advantage of state guarantee, implicit or explicit, in a public sector project, and, secondly, that the higher costs of the private capital should be paid by higher returns from the particular project. As I have said, there are no examples of private sector capital coming into building roads, pumping stations, railways projects and so on.

Economic conditions have changed and in 1985 that working party should be reconvened. This time, may we have some accountants on the body? Take, for example, the water industry, where, as a result of the negative EFLs being reduced substantially this year, the financing ratio of the industry has been cut from 40 per cent. to some 26 per cent. If private capital came into the water industry to the extent of £100 million, water charges would not have had to have gone up by 11 or 12 per cent. By my calculations, they would have gone up by 4 or 5 per cent. Private sector capital, achieving the same borrowing ratio as has existed in the past year—which, therefore, has presumably been acceptable as prudent financial management—could come into the water industry if the tests established in 1981 were revised.

I urge the Government to consider reconvening the working party, so that it may examine whether the tests can be changed. Private sector capital could then come into public sector projects and, at the margin, enable projects that might otherwise be postponed to go ahead.

9.15 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): The Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that this was the second time that he had opened a debate on a public

[Mr. Terry Davis]

expenditure White Paper. This is the second time that I have wound up such a debate and on both occasions I have had the pleasant task of commenting on a maiden speech.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) will understand when I say that my pleasure is tinged, as I am sure his is, with deep sadness because of the circumstances that caused the by-election in his constituency. The Opposition and I associate ourselves with everything that the hon. Gentleman said about Sir Anthony Berry. I knew Sir Anthony only slightly, but he was a very nice man and I am sure that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate will be a worthy successor to him. The hon. Gentleman made an interesting speech and, after the tour of his constituency, he made a telling point. I shall return to it in a moment.

There were some other interesting speeches from Conservative Members. The debate has shown that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the Labour party is united, in urging an increase in public expenditure, and the Conservative party is increasingly split. From one wing of the Conservative party, represented by, for example, the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), we had pleas for increases in public expenditure. From the other wing, we had the usual ritual calls for cuts in public expenditure from hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), who made his usual speech. He always calls for cuts in social security benefits, and today he added a call for cuts in housing benefit. He does not seem to be aware that housing benefit has already been cut for many people as a result of changes made by the Secretary of State for Social Services in increasing the assumed scale margin. However, the hon. Member for Bridlington is not easily satisfied and he wants to cut public expenditure even more.

I must draw particular attention to what I can only describe as a notably brave speech by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who called not only for the withdrawal of all subsidies to agriculture—I am sure that the farmers of Warwickshire will be interested to read that—but for an end to subsidies to the arts. That was an especially brave call from an hon. Member representing Stratford-on-Avon. I understand that the subsidy to the Royal Shakespeare Company this year is £4·9 million and I am sure that the citizens of Stratford-on-Avon will be pleased to know that their hon. Member has called for an end to that subsidy. The Opposition hope that the Government will turn a deaf ear to his pleas. This is already the first Government under which theatres have closed.

I was impressed by the speech of the hon. Member for Southgate. He respects the sincerity of Opposition Members who urge increases in public expenditure as a way of reducing unemployment. We respect his sincerity in taking the opposite view, although we do not agree with him. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman put his finger squarely on one of the three reasons for the Labour party's opposition to the White Paper. We oppose it because it is based on a misunderstanding of the connection between public expenditure and the economy. This Conservative Government regard public expenditure as a burden on the economy. As the hon. Member for Southgate explained, they regard an increase in public expenditure as leading to fewer jobs whereas we regard such an increase as something that will create jobs. We believe that an increase in public expenditure will create job
because it will involve increased capital invest
increased employment opportunities in the social
It will also involve the creation of jobs indirect
hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cath
Maxton) explained, and we believe that an in
public expenditure will also lead to an expansi
economy, which will in turn lead to even mor
brief, the Government see public expenditure a
on the economy, while the Labour party sees
accelerator.

That is why we reject the White Paper's appro
its emphasis at the beginning on public expendit
held constant in real terms and amounting to
proportion of the nation's income. In our opinio
the wrong approach.

Against that background, we also oppose t
Paper because the Government have got the wror
for public expenditure. It is interesting that, alt
Chancellor of the Exchequer begins his White P
the statement that public expenditure is
"being held constant in real terms",
he harks back to 1983-84. He does not compare
with this year but goes back a year and compare
with 1983-84. I suggest that he makes that com
order to distract attention from the fact that w
proposing next year is a cut in real terms in what
spent this year. That is what the Government
planning.

Before we look at the truth behind the figur
first follow the Chancellor a little further into
Paper. Having claimed that the Government's
public expenditure to remain static in real t
devotes a whole page to showing us tha
expenditure is static in cash terms. Having esta
so-called planning figure of £132 billion in cash
1985-86—a figure that he established two yea
he now regards himself as committed to that figu
not matter what has changed in the last two year
has happened to inflation, unemployment, inte
or to the pound. The right hon. Gentleman
inflexibility as a virtue. To prove his inflexibili
advertise it to the nation, he devotes a whole pa
subject in his White Paper.

Almost a whole page is given over to a ba
chart 1.1—which is intended to show that if o
a bar 8.2 cm long and one then draws another b
long, they look the same, and that if one th
another bar that is 8.3 cm long, it looks almost
A whole page is devoted to that picture for
intelligent supporters of the Government's polic

But the real effect of that rigidity is shown in
If we look at what the Government are really
comparing what will be spent next year with what
spent this year, and if we adjust for the effect of
we can see that public expenditure is not being k
but is being reduced by £1·6 billion. That is a
of 1·3 per cent.

We also oppose the White Paper because we s
expenditure as representing public services. Mos
Government expenditure are rightly terme
services. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer w
some attention, I would tell him that that point
time and again by my hon. Friends. An analysi
makes up those real totals of £120·7 billion f
expenditure next year compared with £122·3 bil

this year, shows that the biggest reduction is in industry, energy, trade and employment. Yet that is at a time when unemployment is rising.

I concede that the figures are distorted by the inclusion of the effect of negative external financial limits. The Chief Secretary tried, in the most unconvincing part of his speech, to explain that away but he cannot escape the fact that prices for gas and electricity will rise next year by more than they would otherwise have risen if the Government had not changed the EFLs. A tax on gas and electricity is coming.

Mr. John Townend: The main cause of the big difference between this year and next year is the cost of the miners' strike. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, the cost will run into billions of pounds.

Mr. Davis: I do not agree that that is the reason for the difference, and I shall explain how the big difference is caused. In addition to the tax on gas and electricity as a result of negative external financing limits an effect will be caused by the changes in corporation tax announced in last year's Budget. They are not shown in the White Paper.

The most significant reduction in the White Paper, which has nothing to do with the miners' strike, is the reduction of £900 million in real terms in public expenditure on housing. That is a reduction, in one year, of 30 per cent. in the Government's spending on housing. That has nothing to do with miners, but it has everything to do with Ministers.

That is happening when there is growing evidence of the need for more to be spent on the repairs and renovations of local authority housing. That evidence is supported today by the document published by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities which says that £19 billion is needed to modernise and renovate council housing and to repair serious defects in non-traditional, industrialised and system-built dwellings. At such a time, to suggest that the amount spent on housing should be reduced by 30 per cent. is nothing less than criminal.

Not only people who rent council accommodation will suffer as a result of the White Paper. The Government are also hitting owner-occupiers by cutting £900 million from expenditure. A large part of housing expenditure is on improvement grants. The hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) intervened in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook to draw attention to the number of improvement grants allocated last year. I accept that in 1983-84 about 250,000 improvement grants were made. The hon. Member contrasted that with the 70,000 improvement grants made in 1979-80.

If the hon. Gentleman had read a little further in the White Paper he would have seen a straightforward statement—perhaps "confession" would be a better word—that expenditure next year is expected to fall to the levels

"which prevailed before the recent urge of grant-aided activity".

That means that the Government intend to reduce the amount available for improvement grants, and the number of improvement grants, to the levels that they were before the increase. The Government intend to move back to the levels that existed before 1982-83, back to the levels before the 1982 Budget, back to where they were three years after the 1979 general election and one year before the 1983 general election. That is the nub. Improvement grants have served their purpose—not for housing, but for the Conservative party's electoral purposes.

This Conservative Government claim to care about home ownership. The truth is that they do not care about home owners. They care even less——

Mr. Marlow: Rubbish.

Mr. Davis: The facts are there in the White Paper for which the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) will vote tonight. The hon. Gentleman has not been present for much of the debate.

Sir William Clark: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) says that the Conservative Government do not care about home owners, but many council homes are being sold to sitting tenants and the Labour party opposes that.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman makes my point. The Government care about home ownership and are anxious to encourage tenants to buy their properties. Once they have bought them, the Government wash their hands of those people. My hon. Friends and I are constantly having former council tenants coming to our advice bureaux asking for help to get them the improvement grants that they were led to believe, before the general election, that they would receive under Conservative rule.

The Government care even less about those who need accommodation, rented or owner-occupied. Last year there were only 38,000 starts in the public sector, fewer than in the year before and only 37 per cent. of the figure for 1978.

A year ago the Chief Secretary urged us to look at the figure for new starts in the private sector. He did not refer us to that figure this year. I was not surprised, because that figure has gone down in the last 12 months. The number of new starts in the private sector is not only lower than the year before but is lower than it was in 1978, the last year of Labour rule, yet we have in power a Government who are supposed to care about home owners.

The British people are not concerned with any doctrinal distinction between public and private sector starts. They are interested in the total number of new starts, public and private together. Last year, the total number of new starts went down, as it had gone down the year before, and there were only 190,000 new starts compared with 265,000 in 1978.

This year, says the Chief Secretary, let us consider not starts but completions, in particular in the private sector. Completions in that sector in 1984, he says, were the highest for 10 years. I must tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as I told him last year, that I would respect him more if he was more fastidious in his use of statistics.

The number of completions in the private sector last year was only 1,000 more than in 1978. Completions in the public sector were 83,000 fewer than in 1978. Thus, the right hon. and learned Gentleman must know that last year, 82,000 fewer dwellings were completed than were completed in 1978, a reduction of 30 per cent. Those are the facts that matter to those who need somewhere to live.

In his closing remarks the Chief Secretary criticised on several grounds the Opposition amendment, but unfortunately he did so with less than his usual careful enunciation. Unusually for him, he gabbled through that part of his speech at such a speed that I could not make

[Mr. Davis]

notes quickly enough. I apologise to the right hon. and learned Gentleman if I am unable, therefore, to reply to all his strictures, but I will deal with those points that I managed to note.

He quibbled with our reference to worsening unemployment. He said that employment had risen by 500,000 during the 18 months to September 1984. I am not sure of the source of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's figure, and he may wish to write to me about that after the debate. More important, he may wish to confirm whether his figure of 500,000 new jobs included 450,000 imaginary jobs.

In June 1983 or thereabouts someone, I am not sure who, decided to take the figures of people in employment and add 58,000 each quarter for employees—58,000 assumed or imaginary jobs—and another 18,000 jobs each quarter for the self-employed who were supposed to have got new jobs, giving a total of 76,000—assumed or imaginary jobs—each quarter. The Chancellor of the Exchequer does not like it, but it is the truth. There was not a once-and-for-all adjustment of 76,000 because 76,000 were added every quarter for 18 months. I suspect that when we learn the source of the Chief Secretary's figures we shall find that he has included, as the Government usually do, at least 450,000, perhaps more, imaginary jobs in his figure of 500,000 new jobs.

Secondly, the Chief Secretary boasted that GDP is at its highest level ever. It would be, of course. It would be surprising if GDP were not at its highest level ever because of the level of inflation last year and the year before that. When we adjust the latest available figures for inflation, we find that GDP in 1983 was only £2·6 billion higher than in 1978. When we remove oil and gas from the calculations—I know that the Chief Secretary likes the finesse of figures presented in this way—we find that GDP was £4 billion less than during the last year of the Labour Government.

It is our case that the Government's policy on public expenditure is wrong. It is wrong in terms of economics, and it is wrong in social terms. They have it wrong in total and wrong in detail as well. The Government's economic policy is wrong throughout, and that is why the Labour Opposition will vote against it this evening.

9.37 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): We have had a wide-ranging debate upon the White Paper with many interesting and effective speeches, but none more so than the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). I think the whole House welcomed the gracious and proper tribute that he paid to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Berry. We all reflected again during his speech on the tragic events that led to the by-election which resulted in my hon. Friend being here. I think that he blended insight, knowledge, wit and judgment and combined a felicity of phrase with brevity which left the House eager to hear from him again. He made comments about the difficulties of Government forecasting which were rather more perceptive than those made immediately before his by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). My hon. Friend's comments about the autumn statement and the speculation that it has generated—the way in which the media and other commentators have made use of the figures contained within it—deserve careful consideration. My hon. Friend's remarks have been reflected in the comments of others during the debate.

Few, if any, of those who follow these financial and economic debates are entirely happy with the present arrangements. The public expenditure White Paper debate comes close to the Budget and this leads to difficulties. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) referred to the difficulties. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has suggested that June might be an appropriate time for the debate in seeking to influence the annual public expenditure survey that is then getting under way. I understand the concern about having the debate at this time of year, when inevitably it is overshadowed by expectations and keen anticipation of the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a few weeks' time.

I know that others welcome the opportunity to discuss the Government's plans with the benefit of the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee as soon as possible after they are published. Given the pressure that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook applied to obtain the debate, I think that he would fall into that category. It is not an easy dilemma to resolve, but I think that we should give further thought to the timing of the debate, and perhaps discussions through the usual channels could find a satisfactory solution.

Many Budget suggestions have been made during the debate. Much advice has been given to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, some of it helpful from my right hon. and hon. Friends and some of it less helpful from elsewhere. I must give the traditional reply to all and say that I cannot seek to anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Having said that, I turn my attention to the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and to the references made to it by my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, the Chairman of the Select Committee. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also referred to points made in the report.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing referred to the argument about whether the figures should be given in cost or cash terms. The argument is fairly well worn. My right hon. Friend argued that if the rate of inflation was less than expected, the cash limits should be cut. However, I am fairly sure that he would not argue that if inflation was higher than expected, the cash limits should be increased. The Government have set their course upon the use of cash limits, and I believe that an attempt to change to cost terms would undermine the system. The Government are not convinced by the Select Committee's arguments on that point.

My right hon. Friend also referred to the treatment of debt interest. Many other hon. Members also commented on that point, including the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). The Select Committee suggests that debt interest should be included within the public expenditure planning total. I quite understand why the Select Committee takes that view, but I hope that the Committee, for its part, will understand why the Government have taken a contrary view. The issue, in essence, is: what arrangemens will best serve the interests of the control of public expenditure? The Government's view is that control is better secured with debt interest outside rather than inside the planning total.

No great issue of principle is at stake. Debt interest is not in any way neglected in the Government's statistics or in their planning procedures. It is included within the wider definition of public expenditure — general Government expenditure — that appears in numerous prominent official statistics. Public expenditure, so defined, is a key concept in the medium term financial strategy which is reviewed each year in the Budget.

Mr. Higgins: My hon. Friend has not explained why discipline is better enforced by excluding interest from the planning total.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend should refer again to the comments made in the Treasury's replies to the Select Committee.

No great issue of principle is involved. Either procedure could be adopted, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has decided that, on balance, it is better to exclude debt interest and to follow the practice of the past. There is not much virtue in going round and round the course.

The question of asset sales has been referred to. The argument about negative expenditure has been rehearsed before. I wish to refer now to the question of local authority capital spending in the context of council house sales. Local authority capital expenditure figures are an integral part of the overall expenditure plans set out in the White Paper. The new controls to be debated next week are designed not to impose cuts but merely to prevent further capital overspends. Uncontrolled capital spending by local authorities could not fail to have a major impact on my right hon. Friend's budgetary policy.

This has been a wide-ranging debate and I should like to consider manpower, for which I have special responsibility. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) asked about the index-linked element of index-linked bonds allowed for in the accounts. He will find that the figures for debt interest on a national accounts basis are given in paragraph 26 on page 21 of the White Paper.

Sir William Clark: If, for some unknown reason, the net interest payment of £9 billion is not included in the £132 billion of total public expenditure, is the index-linked amount included?

Mr. Hayhoe: The figures in paragraph 26 include the revaluation of principal in line with the retail price index as well as normal interest and bonuses. The RPI assumptions are consistent with those used for social security upratings. If my hon. Friend is dissatisfied after examining those figures, perhaps he will write to me.

The Select Committee recommended the inclusion of a composite table in future White Papers showing manpower figures for past and future years. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary told the Committee, we shall certainly do our best to improve the White Paper's presentation in this respect next year. We should be able to meet the Committee's wishes and provide figures for earlier years, but the inclusion of planning figures for future years, other than for the Civil Service, may prove impractical. For example, targets are set for manpower for each regional health authority in England, but otherwise the Government do not directly control NHS manpower. Nor do they control local authority or nationalised industry manpower. There are therefore considerable difficulties in providing figures for future years on a common and comparable basis with those for the Civil Service.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): How has it been possible to make a judgment on the funding of education when there are 590,000 so-called "others" in education in England who are not mentioned in the White Paper? Throughout the United Kingdom, it is likely that 700,000 people are not mentioned in the White Paper. If so, how can a judgment be made?

Mr. Hayhoe: Off the cuff, I cannot answer my hon. Friend, but I shall certainly look into the matter and write to him.

When the Government came to office, we pledged to reduce bureaucracy and administration wherever possible. We have made significant progress in reducing the number of civil servants. The figures have now been brought down below the targets that we set immediately after the 1979 general election. The result is that we are now saving £750 million net on the pay bill. The reductions have been achieved by improving efficiency, dropping or materially curtailing functions and by privatisation and contracting out. It has for some years been our policy to contract work out of the public service when it is commensurate with sound management and provides good value for money for the taxpayer. That makes a valuable contribution to reducing public expenditure and the better use of resources. Much has already been done and substantial savings have been made. For example, virtually all cleaning and laundry in the Ministry of Defence is contracted out.

The Government believe that more can be done in the NHS, in local authorities and in Government Departments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment plans to introduce legislation along the lines of the recent consultative paper which will require local authorities to extend the successful competitive tendering regime for building work to a range of other services—school meals, cleaning of buildings, and so on. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is actively pursuing with health authorities the possibilities for increased competitive tendering.

For Government Departments we are proceeding in two ways. First, Departments will continue to ensure that as much departmental work as possible is subject to competition and that they identify every opportunity for competitive tendering across the widest range of departmental activity. The top management systems which Departments have set up will provide a useful means of identifying suitable areas. Secondly, and more specifically, Government Departments will be required to test the market for five specified services: cleaning, laundry, catering, security guarding — subject to appropriate safeguards—and some kinds of maintenance work.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: This is boring.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is important, because the amount of taxpayers' money that is devoted to paying public servants is a significant part of our overall public expenditure. It is perfectly right and proper that we should be seeking to obtain the best value for the taxpayers' money.

I turn to more controversial matters. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook talked about the spending linked with the coal strike and compared other cuts in public

[Mr. Hayhoe]

spending. A number of hon. Members asked questions about the contrast between the cost of the miners' strike and tighter controls on public spending. I emphasise that the Government had no wish to see the cost that the coal strike has imposed on all concerned. Others must answer for that cost. We much regret the cost—whether faced by miners and their families or by the public purse. The Government were certainly not prepared to give in to violence and intimidation or to be deflected from pursuing the right policies for long-term viability in the coal industry by accepting the unreasonable and unprecedented demand that pits should be kept open until the last tonne of coal was exhausted, regardless of cost. When challenged, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made it absolutely clear that he would have given in to Mr. Scargill's demands. There was no equivocation about what the right hon. Gentleman said. He was prepared to give in to those demands because of the cost involved. That means that the right hon. Gentleman would have betrayed the working miners who kept industry and commerce going.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister accept that if there had been a Labour Government there would not have been a miners' dispute? The hon. Gentleman's point is irrelevant.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming immediately the craven behaviour that we would have expected from the Labour Front Bench.

I reiterate the Government's firm commitment and determination to hold public spending at a level that we can afford and that will further the aims of lower inflation and sustained economic growth.

What do the official Opposition offer? The debate has shown once again that

"Labour has lost the economic argument",

that

"People do not believe Labour policies will work"

and that

"Labour has little credibility on policies for dealing with the economy."

They are not just the views of Conservative Members; they are quotations from a Labour party document which was leaked to the *New Statesman* at the end of last year.

Even Opposition Members now agree with the realism of the conclusion:

"Labour has lost the economic argument."

They know that when they dealled their policies, they generated disbelief among the electorate. In their election manifesto, they set out proposals for increasing public expenditure by approximately £40 billion. When their politics of that pork barrel failed to get them elected, the Leader of the Opposition was punting for a spending increase of £6 billion. By October last year he was down to £2·3 billion—little more than one twentieth of the figure that he and his party had been proposing only six months before.

Today, when the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was challenged by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman was surprisingly coy. Despite his customary bluster, he did not wish to reveal how much increase in public expenditure he wanted to see. The only figure that he mentioned was £1·5 billion. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Hayhoe: I should like to give way to the organ grinder, to use an expression the right hon. Gentleman has used before. I should willingly give way to the hon. Gentleman if there is some confusion.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Hayhoe: It is clear that that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not know by how much he would like to increase public expenditure.

Mr. Terry Davis: It is plain that the Minister wrote that part of his speech, like the rest of it, before he listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). When the Minister reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that my right hon. Friend gave the figures in his speech.

Mr. Hayhoe: When the right hon. Gentlemn was challenged by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary, he failed to give the figures. When I challenged him a moment ago, he would not give them. He put up the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) to try to bail him out.

The reason is that the right hon. Gentleman knows that increases in public expenditure would tend to be inflationary and higher inflation would mean fewer jobs. When he was restrained by ministerial responsibility, in December 1978, he said:

"in terms of promoting employment opportunities throughout the country . . . nothing is more important than containing inflation."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1978; Vol. 943, c. 1271.]

As the right hon. Gentleman so aptly put it in his manifesto for the party leadership:

"Our vague hopes of achieving growth through Government spending were barely understood and rarely believed"

when they were put to the electorate at the last general election.

The contrast between the economic weakness which Labour party policies would bring and the present resilience of the economy is stark. Who would have believed a year ago that the economy could withstand a 12-month coal strike without power cuts, massive lay-offs and short-time working? Just think what the British economy could have achieved in 1984 without that damaging dispute, supported by so many Opposition Members. Now that it is over, we can look for increased growth in the months ahead, but to ensure future success we must again reject the irrelevant and irresponsible policies of the Labour party. That is why we shall vote against the Opposition amendment tonight.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 357.

Division No. 137] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bidwell, Sydney
Alton, David	Blair, Anthony
Anderson, Donald	Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boyes, Roland
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ashton, Joe	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Barnett, Guy	Buchan, Norman
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Caborn, Richard
Beith, A. J.	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell, Ian
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Bermingham, Gerald	Canavan, Dennis

Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Austin Mitchell.

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry

NOES

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*

Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd 9428).

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Road Traffic

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That, in the course of its consideration of the matter of the Government's Public Expenditure Plans to 1987-88, in relation to the Scotland Programme, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 25th March at half-past Ten o'clock.

That during the proceedings on the matter of the Government's Public Expenditure Plans to 1987-88, in relation to the Scotland Programme, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 67 (Meetings of standing committees) the Scottish Grand Committee shall have leave, at its sitting in Edinburgh on Monday 25th March, to sit until half-past Three o'clock.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

War Widows

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am delighted to be able to open this Adjournment debate on behalf of the British war widows.

During this debate I wish to bring to the attention of Her Majesty's Government the financial plight of British war widows in general and my constituent, Mrs. Ivy Cairns, in particular.

It can never be denied that we owe an enormous moral debt of honour to all the widows of those who fell in the service of their country in the first and second world wars. Indeed, without their supreme sacrifice, hon. Members of this House would not have had the privilege of serving in a freely elected Parliament. Today's war widows have security and care but not so the widows of the two world wars.

What causes a lady like my constituent, Mrs. Ivy Cairns, to write to Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister returning the war medals of her first husband? It is a very sad story but needs to be told in my effort to help Mrs. Cairns and many other war widows similarly placed. Sadly, Mrs. Cairns lost her first husband, who died fighting for his country in France during the second world war in 1940. Mrs. Cairns was then awarded £1 per week war widow's pension until she remarried a retired police officer in 1945. Upon remarriage Mrs. Cairns was awarded a £50 pay-off gratuity from the War Office who then discharged their responsibility in law in favour of her new husband. Mrs. Cairns has calculated that this has saved the Treasury over £40,000 in war widow's pension.

Sadly, again, Mrs. Cairns was widowed for a second time in 1960 and was not recognised as a police widow because her husband had not been a serving police officer at the time of their marriage. My constituent therefore was not recognised as a "police widow" or as a "war widow", so from 1960 until 1971 she was completely without any kind of widow's pension. In 1971 she was awarded £1·32 per week as an age-related pension.

If Mrs. Cairns' first husband had been an officer, she would not have received the small gratuity but, under a right inherited from the sevice Departments many years ago, she may have had her war widows' pension restored at the discretion of the Secretary of State on the death of her second husband. This is unfair and unjust because many "other rank soldiers" conscripted during wartime came back into industry and commerce to rise to the very top and even sit in the British Cabinet. So prospects for an officer's widow could not be said to be superior.

Mrs. Cairns' soldier husband was only in the Army for a few months so could not earn a commission. He was killed holding the last line against the advancing German army at Dunkirk, killed so that thousands could be saved in the armada of small boats.

Other countries award so many special concessions to their war widows that they are financially secure. They consider that if a women is widowed through her husband's war-time service they owe her a great debt for the remainder of her life. Therefore, if a war widow remarries and is widowed again, she is immediately reinstated so that she can continue to be protected as a war widow.

Mrs. Christa Gardiewski of Frankfurt, a German war widow, freely confesses that she is better treated than British war widows.

Italy not only reinstates its war widows on the death of a second husband but upon that remarriage part of a women's war widow's pension continues to be paid to her if she marries a man of low income.

France has superior arrangements to the United Kingdom, and the Australians have an eight-page list of concessions given to their war widows. I could give many more examples.

This country has betrayed British war widows of the two world wars. Because I feel so angry with successive Governments I should today be calling for parity with widows of service men killed in Northern Ireland or in the Falkland Islands Task Force; and so on; improvement of the status of those devoted widows who have nursed badly war-disabled ex-servicemen until bereavement, and stopping the confiscation of the war widows pension during hospitalisation, and so on.

Consideration of those matters cannot be left much longer, because we have 65,000 world war widows who are dying at the rate of 5,000 each year.

However, I shall concentrate on my demand that all war widows who remarry and who are widowed again be immediately reinstated as war widows; in other words, the state shall always accept total responsibility for their widowhood. That would help Mrs. Cairns and so many like her who do not feel bitter but just disappointed in their country.

Let me quote from the letter sent from Buckingham Palace at the end of the war to each widow. It said:

"The Queen and I offer you our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow. We pray that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation."

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, to dwell on that sentence which talks of "your country's gratitude".

10.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) for initiating this debate about war widows. Indeed, in this year which marks the 40th anniversary of the ending of the second world war, it is particularly appropriate that we should remind ourselves of the debt which we owe to those who lost their husbands in the service of this country. War widows have always been regarded as very special. I entirely endorse the sentiments of my hon. Friend that it is proper that that should be so. Nothing can compensate them for their terrible loss. The special circumstances of their bereavement are, however, recognised in the preferential provisions made for them under the war pensions scheme administered by my Department. There are some 67,000 war widows today, and hon. Members will wish to know just what they receive under that scheme.

First, there is the standard war widow's pension, which is currently £46·55 a week for the widow of a private soldier; other widows also receive additions for their late husband's service rank. My hon. Friend expressed his particular concern about the elderly war widow. I very much share this concern. Elderly war widows are

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

generally recognised to have greater needs and, for that reason, they receive special age allowances in addition to the pensions that I have already mentioned.

The age allowance is currently £5 a week at age 65. It is increased to £10 a week at age 70, and to £12·50 at age 80. Those allowances were significantly improved last November, when the new tier of £12·50 was also introduced for the very elderly—an increase of almost £4 a week. I am very glad that the Government were able to provide this additional help for elderly war widows. It means that a war widow aged 65 or over receives between £51·55 and £59·05 a week at least—this is, up to £23·25 a week more than her national insurance counterpart. Furthermore, as hon. Members will know, one of the first acts of this Government was to free war widows' pensions from income tax.

My hon. Friend has suggested that we are less generous in the provision that we make in this country for our war widows, as compared with other countries. I do not accept that. Such comparisons are not easy to make; one needs to look not only at the rates of pensions and allowances and the cost of living in those countries, but at such things as the conditions of entitlement to pension, whether or not it is taxable and whether or not it is means-tested in any way. Generally speaking, our provisions for war widows compare very favourably with those of other countries. I reject my hon. Friend's assertion that our widows have been betrayed.

In addition to the pensions payable under the war pensions scheme, for the widows of men who served in the armed forces after March 1973 a pension is also provided under the occupational pension scheme for the forces, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence. The changes to the armed forces pension scheme in 1973 represented a substantial improvement in the occupational pension provision for service men and their families. However, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, they inevitably lead to comparisons being drawn with the provision for service men, and their widows, whose seervice ended before that date.

Improvements in occupational pension schemes are not normally made retrospective; and the cost of doing so in this case would have been prohibitive—up to £600 million a year in current terms. That could not be afforded then and it cannot be afforded now. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that it would have been wrong to have refrained from making those major improvements, just because they could not be made retrospective. That would not have been in the best interests of current service men and their families.

I should like to mention a further example of the Government's concern for war widows. Last October my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces announced that, beginning this year, the Government would be making an annual sum available to the Royal British Legion to assist war widows to visit their husbands' graves overseas. The sum for 1985-86 is £150,000. The Royal British Legion has agreed to assume responsibility for making all the necessary arrangements for these visits, including the handling of applications and the selection of countries and cemeteries to be visited.

My hon. Friend raised the particular question o rules which apply to war widow's pension where a w re-marries and is subsequently widowed a second ti should explain to hon. Members that we regard the widow's pension as a means of providing for maintenance; it is a case of the state stepping in to over the responsibility that would have fallen to he husband. If she subsequently marries again, her husband assumes responsibility for her support, and widow's pension ceases—although any allowanc payment to her for the children of her late hus continue to be paid.

On remarriage, a widow whose former husband h rank other than that of an officer receives a gra equivalent to one year's war widow's pension. Shoul be so unfortunate as to be widowed a second time cannot have her war widow's pension reinstated. would of course, normally be eligible for nat insurance widow's pension. Widows of officers d receive a gratuity when they remarry. Instead, as my Friend has mentioned, there is the facility for them to their war widow's pension reinstated if their se husbands die. I must stress, however, that reinstatement of pension is not automatic. It is made in cases where there is shown to be a financial need. A 120 officers' widows currently receive a reins pension. This usually amounts to a topping up o national insurance widow's pension and any other in to the level of their war widow's pension.

My hon. Friend quoted the particular, very sad, ca Mrs. Cairns. Let me say that I have the greatest sym for that lady. She suffered the most grevious loss whe young husband of only a few months was tragically during the second world war. When she remarried five years later she would of course have been awar she would thereby relinquish her war widow's pen Subsequently, however, she had the great misfortune widowed a second time; and she was unable to re either a pension from her second husband's employ because he had already retired when they married, national insurance widow's pension because he was the age of 65 in 1948 when the scheme began. How even if Mrs. Cairns' first husband had been an office question of re-instatement of her war widow's pe would, as I have explained, have depended upon her in financial need.

My hon. Friend has described as anomalou difference in treatment between the widows of officer those of other ranks in this respect. These part provisions date back some 60 years, and the reason the difference are largely historical. I accept that there be thought to be little justification for such a distin today, and I can assure my hon. Friend that I certainly reflect further on the points which he has r

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having raise matter and I am glad of this opportunity to assure hi other hon. Members of the Government's conti commitment to the cause of war widows and the disabled.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minut Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SURREY BILL *[Lords]*

Considered.

Amendments made: In page 10, lines 34 and 35, leave out "howsoever propelled" and insert "propelled otherwise than manually".

In page 20, leave out lines 1 to 11 and insert—

"(8) The provisions of sections 99 and 102 of the Building Act 1984 (enforcement of, and appeals, against notices requiring the execution of works) shall apply in relation to any notice under subsection (7) above as if—

(a) references in those provisions to that Act included a reference to that subsection;

(b) in section 99(2) the words from 'and *(b)* without prejudice' to the end were omitted; and

(c) for the reference in section 102 to the court there were substituted a reference to the Secretary of State."

In page 20, lines 23 and 24, leave out

"287(1)*(a)* of the Act of 1936"

and insert

"95(1)*(a)* of the Building Act 1984".

In page 23, leave out lines 29 to 39 and insert—

"(8) The provisions of sections 99 and 102 of the Building Act 1984 (enforcement of, and appeals, against notices requiring the execution of works) shall apply in relation to any notice under subsection (7) above as if—

(a) references in those provisions to that Act included a reference to that subsection;

(b) in section 99(2)*(b)* the words from 'and to a further fine' to the end were omitted; and

(c) for the reference in section 102 to the court there were substituted a reference to the Secretary of State."

In page 23, line 40, leave out

"287(1)*(a)* of the Act of 1936"

and insert

"95(1)*(a)* of the Building Act 1984".

In page 31, line 4, leave out

"Section 287 of the Act of 1936"

and insert

"Sections 95 and 96 of the Building Act 1984".—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

1. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will extend the length of the youth training scheme.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): This is one of a number of ways of increasing opportunities for young people which we are considering.

Sir John Farr: Will my right hon. Friend consider extending the length of the scheme, as it has been so successful? If he extended it initially to one and a half years, and later to two years, would that not be a tremendous investment in the youth of Britain?

Mr. King: I am grateful for the tribute that my hon. Friend has paid to the scheme, and I am encouraged by its success in many different respects. I am also encouraged by the expressions of appreciation from many hon. Members for the contribution that the scheme is making.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is not the problem a lack of flexibility in YTS, in that it suggests the possibility of a job in all cases, whereas it might be as well to help youngsters to survive if, alas, they cannot obtain jobs thereafter?

Mr. King: Obviously, in different parts of the country the success rate in finding full-time employment varies. Some of the schemes, including those in the construction industry, travel agents and hotels and catering, are outstandingly successful, with 90 per cent. or more of youngsters going into full-time work. However, we hope to keep the scheme flexible and to continue to improve it.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Manpower Services Commission told the Select Committee on Employment that it was worried about the status of YTS trainees, and especially about the absence of a form of contract such as is common in Germany. If my right hon. Friend extends the scheme, as we all hope he will, will he take that matter seriously into consideration?

Mr. King: It is important that status is clearly established. If there were proposals to extend the scheme, my hon. Friend's suggestion would add to the improvements that we are considering.

Mr. Park: Is the Minister aware that some youngsters cannot go on the youth training scheme because of the change in board and lodging allowance? The position is that any young person who does not live at home with his or her parents and who depends entirely on the money received under the youth training scheme finds it impossible to pay for lodgings and to keep himself on the money available under the scheme. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider that matter?

Mr. King: We are constantly anxious to meet any such problems. In two successive years we have given what is called the Christmas undertaking that every young person aged 16 who does not go into further education or straight into a job will be guaranteed the offer of a place. We shall wish to ensure that that continues.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is not an extension of the YTS to two years extremely necessary not only to put Britain on a par with other industrialised nations but to give us the opportunity to provide a proper blend of education and training for all youngsters up to the age of 18 before they seek work?

Mr. King: An extension of the scheme would bring us more into line with other member countries of the EC. Anyone who has had the opportunity to study the scheme will realise how essential it is for the scheme to help in the transition from the world of education to the world of work, and to help to give people a proper founding and training for their future work.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that even if he takes on board Labour party policy and extends the scheme to two years, that will be no answer to the fact that we are the worst trained nation in the industrial world? Does he appreciate that we need a revolution in training if we are to face our competitors on a fair and square basis? Is he aware that it is the quality as well as the quantity of the youth training scheme that we need to increase? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that if he makes the YTS compulsory at the same time as extending it, he will put a stigma on the scheme which will kill it stone dead for many young people?

Mr. King: My hon. Friends will have taken pleasure at that supplementary question, as some Opposition Members have never stopped trying to find ways to criticise the scheme and carp about its operation. Not only is there more joy in heaven, but there is more joy in the Government if the Opposition have repented in their opposition to the YTS. I shall be delighted, should we be able to proceed to an extension, if that has the support of the Opposition.

Wages Councils

3. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on wages councils.

6. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement outlining the future for wages councils.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The Government are considering the future of wages councils.

Mr. Leigh: What is the point of the Government pricing young people out of jobs—real jobs created by the market place through the operation of wages councils and employment laws generally—and then forcing the taxpayer to price those young people into what are often temporary jobs by the operation of the YTS and the young workers' scheme? Is it not time to sweep away wages councils and thereby perform a great service for young people?

Mr. Bottomley: The point that my hon. Friend makes about young people is most important, although I must remind him that some people, who have good contracts protecting themselves, argue for the abolition of all employment protection.

Mr. Penhaligon: Will the Minister confirm that wages councils for adults often defend wages as low as £70 a week? Does he agree that a socially respo Government have a duty to the most vulnerable in so May we have a guarantee that, at least for adults, h not remove this protective measure?

Mr. Bottomley: Many hon. Members on both si the House argue on behalf of those who are out of The gap between what some people get when th unemployed and what they would get at or slightly wages council rates might be filled by volunteers w to work. It is important to remember the importa trying to help those who are out of work as well as protection to those who are in work.

Mr. George Gardiner: Does my hon. recognise that many people in the business comm would regard the abolition of wages councils as th test of the Government's resolve to make the eco more flexible and thereby to create more opportunities?

Mr. Bottomley: I accept part of what my hon. says. It is worth remembering, however, that move in pay rates and unit labour costs throughout the eco as well as among the lower paid, are important.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Is the Minister awar does not seem to be—that wages councils cater f lowest-paid workers in Britain and that, because reduction in the number of inspectors, many firms co by wages councils are not being inspected? Is he f aware that of those inspected last year, the vast m were found to be paying below the statutory min rates laid down by Parliament? When will the Gentleman start to prosecute such firms?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will be that Ministers do not take decisions on prosecution will also be aware, if he bothers to examin information that is available relating to the prese previous Governments, that he is wrong to assert tha half the firms inspected are paying under the sta minimum rates.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that I started as an engineering apprentice in 1960 I wa the equivalent of £18 a week at today's prices, where equivalent engineering apprentice now receives week? Is it any wonder that in West Germany there more apprentices than there are in Britain?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes the se point that young people look for the opportunity of g greater education and skill training and that many o are willing to accept reasonable incomes if they ha prospects of improving their position and contri more as they become worth more. The crucial point no employer will take on an employee unless he c some benefit from doing so, and no employee will job unless he can see some benefit from taking it. G those two together is what really matters.

Mr. Ron Brown: Why is it that police chiefs, and generals have not priced themselves out of thei despite their high wages? Are those gentlemen doi dirty work for the Tories in suppressing those w protesting against their wages?

Mr. Bottomley: No, Sir.

Mr. Michael Forsythe: Is my hon. Friend awa according to the Low Pay Unit the lowest decile of

who are paid low wages earn a lower proportion of the average wage than their predecessors did 100 years ago? It would seem that wages councils have failed in their purpose. Does my hon. Friend agree that the reality is that the councils have destroyed jobs for young people and for members of the ethnic minorities and rewarded those in semi-skilled jobs at the expense of the unskilled?

Mr. Bottomley: Many interpretations can be drawn from the available figures and all sorts of expectations can be built on the possible reform or abolition of the councils. The questions which face the Government, and which may in time face the House, are whether it is right to allow people to take jobs which they are willing to take at rates of pay which employers are willing to offer and the sort of protection which is essential. It is clear that many industries which are not covered by wages councils pay equivalent rates and that the council's existence may hold down as well as hold up some pay rates.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister confirm that a recent Government report on wages councils inspections in the clothing industry revealed that in half of the workplaces visited some or all of the workers were being illegally underpaid? Does that not show that employers who pay illegal poverty wages and the Government who turn a blind eye to their actions should be condemned, and not the councils? Will the Minister guarantee that the Government will renew their international obligations on minimum rates of pay under the International Labour Organisation convention later this year? Will he also take the opportunity to condemn the report in today's edition of the *Financial Times* that the Government intend to remove young people from the protection of wages councils?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Gentleman would do well to reread the report of the wages inspectors in the three areas that are covered. I have no intention of commenting on press speculation.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the recent letter sent by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) to the hon. Member for Walsall, North, about his new practice of answering written questions relating to unemployment statistics in different parts of the United Kingdom by reference to material in the Library.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): Yes, Sir. I shall publish all the letters that I have sent to the hon. Member on this subject and also that sent by me to all right hon. and hon. Members on 19 October 1984. I am grateful to him for drawing attention to the new arrangements that have been introduced into the Library to enable the House to have immediate access to a wider range of unemployment information at less cost. A written answer which, coming from the same source, would give identical information, would be slower and more expensive. But if the hon. Gentleman insists, we are ready to oblige.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware that we do insist? It is unacceptable that hon. Members cannot seek information from Ministers on unemployment statistics. We can see that only as a cover up for embarrassing information—*[Interruption.]* The Minister says that if we insist, the policy will be restored to what it was. Is that a firm pledge? Will the Minister confirm that that is the position?

Mr. Clark: Of course. I have just said that. That is the position. I do not understand the confrontational setting in which the hon. Gentleman claims to see this topic. This arrangement was introduced to speed up the service that is available to members. There is ample precedent in "Erskine May" at page 341 for reference to published sources. If it is beyond the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity or if he is too busy to walk along the corridor to the Library to read the information for himself, he will, as I have said, consume our time and taxpayers' money and get a written answer. However, it will come about three days later than if he were to go to the Library.

Mr. Malone: Is my hon. Friend aware that the new arrangements in the Library give far more detailed coverage of unemployment figures? In view of that, is it right that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) should try to write his press releases at public expense?

Mr. Clark: That is just about it. That probably explains why the hon. Gentleman's press releases are so turgid and dreary. Were he to devote some of his notoriously high IQ to drafting more convoluted questions, he would probably get better results for his local paper.

Following are the letters:

David Winnick Esq MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A OAA 7 January 1985

Dear David

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 4 December to Dr. Menhennet concerning the information requested in your parliamentary question on unemployment figures for the West Midlands to which I replied on 29 November.

Now that I have replied to your further question about the change in practice in answering questions on unemployment statistics (Official Report, 6 December 1984, Vol 69, Cols 259-60) there is little for me to add. I should however emphasise that the new arrangements provide a *more* effective means of giving Members the figures they require. In particular data should be provided more quickly and conveniently than before. I would also add that the Library is only expected to deal with the more straightforward requests for data, extending the service they were already providing. We will continue to answer Members whose questions pose particular problems.

As you may know, John Prescott has also written to Tom King on this matter and I enclose a copy of that correspondence.

ALAN CLARK

David Winnick Esq MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A OAA 23rd January 1985

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 8 January about parliamentary questions on unemployment statistics.

When we spoke about this matter, I said that any questions *about* the statistics, meaning questions about their coverage or the method of compilation, for example, would receive a reply. Such questions are distinct from straightforward requests for data.

Questions asking for statistics which are not available in the Library, that is information which is not included in publications or readily accessible from the computer, will naturally be answered subject to the usual cost limits.

ALAN CLARK

On 19 October 1984, as sent to all honourable Members representing English constituencies

When I wrote to you on 16 July, I pointed to a new development in the presentation of my Department's unemployment statistics, namely that they would be available for areas defined in terms of local authority wards. I am now pleased to be able to confirm

that figures for parliamentary constituencies, local authority districts, counties and travel to work areas for August were published in the September edition of the Employment Gazette, and will be henceforth. Back figures to June 1983 can also be made available.

In addition, the service of providing unemployment data to colleagues has been significantly improved. A computer data-bank of this information has been established and a terminal link is now available in the House of Commons Library. This facility will provide you with a more convenient and speedier access to data previously only available through my Department. In order to provide as up-to-date information as possible the computer system is supplemented by summary data produced for the monthly press notice. It will therefore be possible to obtain the information for your constituency immediately following the publication of the monthly figure.

Our new system is being introduced over a period of time. Until the middle of next year you will only be able to obtain information for Parliamentary constituencies, local authority districts, counties or travel-to-work areas. After the middle of next year, however, it will be possible to obtain information for any area in which you are interested as long as it can be defined in terms of local authority wards. You will be interested to know that the system will not only produce the data but it will also be possible to undertake simple analyses, for instance to rank areas. The terminals will be operated by the library staff at your request.

One consequence of the ready availability of comprehensive unemployment data through the library is that in dealing with written PQs requesting straightforward information, Members will be referred to the library as the source of such statistics, thereby treating the computer data-base on a par with other published sources and extending our current practice in handling written PQs. I should emphasise, though, that where requests are complicated and require expert attention we will, as now, continue to provide the information in the written reply.

The above procedure will lead to a prompter and more comprehensive access to unemployment statistics. I hope you will find the new arrangements welcome.

ALAN CLARK

5. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed; and what that is as a proportion of the labour force.

Mr. Tom King: On 10 January 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,341,000. This represents an unemployment rate of 13·9 per cent.

Mr. Roberts: Is the Secretary of State aware that those devastatingly bad figures hide a much worse situation in many of the regions? In the Merseyside travel-to-work area, for instance, 20 per cent. of registered active males are unemployed, and the situation is even worse in the inner city areas. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the population of Merseyside is falling, so a bigger percentage of the work force is unemployed, rather than the other way round? Is he further aware that although Merseyside is one of the areas of lowest pay, that low pay has not provided anyone with a job? Indeed, the opposite is true. When will the Government introduce policies to reduce unemployment throughout the country, and especially on Merseyside?

Mr. King: I am aware that the situation is significantly worse in some parts of the country than in others. The hon. Gentleman talks as though a wand could be waved. He is almost looking in the direction of his right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who found that no wand was available to enable even him to prevent the sharp rise in unemployment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take pleasure in observing that in the past year the number of those in work has increased by 340,000, and that at last we have turned the corner in the creation of more jobs.

Mrs. Rumbold: How many people are emp this country, and what proportion of the work fo that figure represent?

Mr. King: I shall reply in percentage Comparisons of unemployment rates are interest unemployment rate in Italy used to be just unde cent., but it is significant that only 55 per cent. of working age are in work. Sixty-six per cent population are at work, and that is a higher propor in France, Germany or Italy.

Mr. Leighton: It is futile for the Secretary of misrepresent the figures in that way. When my ri Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. F office, 300,000 more people were in employm when the Labour Government came to office. T now nearly 2 million fewer people in employm there were when the present Government came t Why does the right hon. Gentleman seek to misr the truth?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman knows perfec that unemployment rose sharply. His hon. Fri Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has challenge failing to take instant action to correct it. He kn fewer people are employed under Socialist Gove in Italy and France at present than there were fo ago. *[Interruption.]* It is no good shouting and sc about a problem which the whole country realises more serious than the Opposition suggest.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is it not true that more j being advertised both locally and nationally tha were three or four years ago, but that, unfort nearly all of them require qualifications? Is tha lesson which the young, in particular, should lea

Mr. King: It is certainly true that even in th east, which I visited last week, where there is unemployment, the first complaints that I hear employers were about skill shortages. That fact home very clearly the importance of our work to i the training programme.

Mr. Prescott: Does the right hon. Gentlema that the fiddled answers that he has just given are Government's fiddled figures on unemployment, are at least 500,000 less than the real figure? Does h that in this alleged third year of economic re unemployment is at unprecedentedly high level employment is at unprecedentedly low levels a unemployment has increased by 2,500 a week wh Conservatives have been in office? The righ Gentleman's time in office has been crowned by a level of unemployment in the January figures. Wha Secretary of State's estimate of unemployment in J and how many will be included for the mining ind the Government's policy of closing down pits is through?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman cannot have l to the answers that I gave. We do not ha unprecedentedly low level of employment. We ha turned the corner, and there were 340,000 more job past year to September 1984.

Mr. Prescott: Since when?

Mr. King: Since September 1983. That is the la for which we have figures. After years of job loss

now have a rise in employment. As regards the miners, expensive fuels produced from uneconomic pits would give the worst possible blow to competitiveness and employment.

Skillcentres

7. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss skillcentres.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Peter Morrison): My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission and discuss a wide range of issues with him.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister advise the chairman of the MSC that, bearing in mind the good record of skillcentres serving South Yorkshire, they should have a greater rather than a smaller role, especially in view of our unemployment problems, which the Minister knows are great and which, we suspect, will become even more deplorable?

Mr. Morrison: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it is better to train as many people as possible with the money voted by the House for adult training. In the two MSC areas that cover the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as a result of decisions on the adult training strategy and the skillcentre training agency, 70 per cent. more people will be trained.

Mr. Batiste: Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is vital to match facilities to needs, that no facilities can remain sacrosanct for ever, and that it is important that they be kept constantly under review so that the best facilities can be provided at all times?

Mr. Morrison: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. It is important to be as flexible as possible, not least because the need for skill training changes quickly. That is precisely the aim of our policy.

Mr. Heffer: How can the Minister justify closing the Aintree skillcentre, which is in an area of high unemployment and has existed since long before the second world war? As the Minister comes from near Merseyside, is it not a disgrace that he should allow the skillcentre to be closed without making any effort to ensure that skills are developed on Merseyside?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I visit Merseyside often, not least because my constituency is close to it. I appreciate the problems there. I am sure he agrees that it much better that approximately twice as many people are to be trained on Merseyside as a result of decisions on reorganising skillcentres.

Mr. Holt: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the MSC, will he reflect on the recent visit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my constituency, when employers made it clear that there was a skills shortage in the area, despite high unemployment? In view of that, will he reconsider the decision to close the Middlesbrough skillcentre?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend has made many representations about the Middlesbrough skillcentre and I understand that, but I hope he agrees that it is in the long-term interests of his constituents and everyone else in the north-east to get more people trained, whether by skillcentres, colleges, private training providers or private companies.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Minister accept that there are disgracefully few opportunities for women to train at skillcentres, and that the closure of skillcentres is worsening that situation? He confirmed to the House last year that only 3 per cent. of those training at skillcentres are women, and he undertook to monitor the situation. What are the results of that monitoring? Have there been any improvements, and if not, why not?

Mr. Morrison: I assure the hon. Lady that it is important that women, just as much as men, should get training. As she will appreciate, women in the adult training programme are trained to a much greater extent outside the skillcentre network than they are inside, because the skillcentre network has concentrated on the traditional skills, as opposed to skills that are more appropriate for women.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985 a total of 1,316,000 claimants had been unemployed in the United Kingdom for over 12 months.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister accept the view of his right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, who accepts that, without doubt, the great problems of unemployment affect the health of the nation, and particularly those recovering from mental illness? Will he give an assurance that he will work with local government and other agencies to reduce unemployment and therefore reduce the calls upon the overstretched social and health services?

Mr. Clark: Yes, I would not deny, and nobody sensibly could, that the stresses and strains of being unemployed must have an effect on an individual's health. It is one component of an extremely tragic and distressing topic, but the cure for this by public spending is extremely elusive. The amelioration of it by social spending is another approach, and one in which we play our part.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Will my hon. Friend confirm that nearly 400,000 new jobs have been created in the past 12 months? Would he care to speculate on how many jobs have been lost through the disruptive strike in the coal industry?

Mr. Clark: The strike in the coal industry is behind us and I am happy to confirm what my hon. Friend says about the creation of new jobs. We should not lose sight of the fact that there are encouraging signs, notably increases in vacancies, investment and overtime work.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister explain, against a background in which Ministers regularly advocate that lower wages will help the problems of the long-term unemployed, why it is that in West Yorkshire average earnings are below average and unemployment is above average?

Mr. Clark: It is true that certain people and certain institutions price individual workers out of the market.

However, what is happening in West Yorkshire is related to regional factors, a point which should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Latham: With regard to the giant social evil of long-term adult unemployment, will my hon. Friend confirm that he and other Ministers in his Department are pressing my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hard between now and Budget day for more action to expand the community programme?

Mr. Clark: I am well aware of the feeling on this subject on both sides of the House. I assure my hon. Friend that his views are widely shared and that many other representations have been made.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Minister admit that 1,316,000 out of work for more than a year is unacceptable? Will he confess that that is nearly 40 per cent. of the total number of unemployed, and that half of those people have been out of work for two years or more? Does he understand, realise, or care that this means grinding poverty for millions of families who live in despair and demoralisation, and with very little hope? Does he realise that it is an enormous waste for the economy? These people would like to work and support their families and make a contribution to the economy. Will he confess that this figure is an admission of the failure of the Government's economic policies? In 1979, when the Tory Government took power—*[Interruption.]* Tory Members do not like the figures. In 1979, when the hon. Gentleman's Government took power, fewer than one in four people were long-term unemployed. Will he cease to pretend to care and start to take action by creating real, permanent jobs in the public sector, rather than ever more marginal schemes under the Manpower Services Commission?

Mr. Clark: Unfortunately, as the hon. Lady must know, and as has been discovered by bitter experience by Socialist Governments all over the western world, the creation of jobs, as she calls it, in the public sector by draining the private sector of investment and capital never works, and in fact causes the situation to deteriorate. Of course, what the hon. Lady says is in part true. It is a highly distressing and intractable problem, and I can tell her that if we saw an easy solution we would apply it.

Non-manufacturing Industry (Productivity)

9. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Employment by how much productivity has increased in the non-manufacturing sector since 1979.

Mr. Tom King: Labour productivity in all sectors of the economy fell between the second quarter of 1979 and the end of 1980. Since then productivity has increased by 12·5 per cent. for the whole economy, by nearly 28 per cent. in manufacturing industries and by 7·5 per cent. in the non-manufacturing industries.

I will, with permission, circulate the full figures for 1979 to 1984 in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Favell: Would my right hon. Friend care to take this opportunity of congratulating the manufacturing sector on its achievement? Would he also like to take this opportunity to remind those engaged in the non-manufacturing sector, in particular the utilities, local government and public transport, of the importance of producing better services at less cost, not only for the profitability of the manufacturing sector, but for the well-being of the country as a whole?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend has spotted the stark contrast between those two figures. I endorse the importance in the non-manufacturing sector, including the utilities and the other bodies to which he referred—many in the service sector, which is of great importance to the economy of the country—of a continuing level of productivity improvement.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that the non-manufacturing sector at No. 10 Downing Street, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr Callaghan) left office, was costing £1·2 million to run? In the last financial year it has increased under the present Prime Minister's stewardship to £2·8 million and is now well on the way to £3 million. During the course of that stewardship she has thrown about 3 million people on to the scrap heap. How much productivity has there been at No. 10, apart from looking after Madam Dross herself?

Mr. King: If No. 10 has played some small part in the halving of the overseas foreign debt which the Government inherited and in achieving the improvement that we have seen in investment and productivity, whatever the figures were—and I suspect that they were not exactly as the hon. Gentleman portrayed—I would have thought that that was undoubtedly an extremely good bargain for this country.

Following are the figures:

Index of output per person employed

	*Whole economy**	*Manufacturing* Industries**	*Non-Manufacturing† Industries*
1979			
1st Quarter	100·3	‡101·7	100·0
2nd Quarter	103·9	‡106·6	102·9
3rd Quarter	102·2	‡102·8	102·1
4th Quarter	102·6	‡105·2	101·7
1980			
1st Quarter	101·6	‡103·2	101·0
2nd Quarter	100·1	‡100·8	99·9
3rd Quarter	99·3	‡ 98·6	99·6
4th Quarter	99·0	‡ 97·4	99·5
1981			
1st Quarter	99·9	‡ 99·0	100·2
2nd Quarter	101·0	‡101·7	100·6
3rd Quarter	102·7	‡105·5	101·6
4th Quarter	‡103·5	‡107·3	102·1
1982			
1st Quarter	‡104·3	‡108·1	102·8
2nd Quarter	‡105·6	‡109·8	103·9
3rd Quarter	‡106·7	‡110·7	105·3
4th Quarter	‡107·5	‡111·1	106·1
1983			
1st Quarter	‡108·9	‡115·4	106·7
2nd Quarter	‡109·2	‡115·9	106·9
3rd Quarter	‡110·9	‡119·3	108·0
4th Quarter	‡111·2	‡121·2	107·8
1984			
1st Quarter	‡111·1	‡121·7	107·6
2nd Quarter	‡110·6	‡122·7	106·6
3rd Quarter	‡111·3	‡124·5	107·0

* *Source: Employment Gazette* Table 1.8.
† *Source:* Central Statistical Office.
‡ Revised.

Government Purchasing

10. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what measures will be taken by his Department following the conclusions of the recent report on Government purchasing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall ensure clear responsibilities and efficient procedures for purchasing and obtaining better value for money.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend do all in his power to simplify Government purchasing procedures so that small firms can play their part in achieving the hoped for savings of £400 million a year?

Mr. Bottomley: We shall do the best that we can, consistent with getting the best value for money.

Building Industry (Apprenticeships)

11. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the level of apprenticeship in craft skills being offered by the building industry and the training that is otherwise available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Construction Industry Training Board is generally satisfied with the level of training in the industry. However, the board is encouraging employers to reform training arrangements so that national skill shortages are avoided.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not the case that people who are trained in craft skills often find it difficult to obtain continuity of work and adequate rewards for their skills? Is there anything that my hon. Friend can do to encourage the use of craft skills, particularly in the building industry, or is it impossible that, for example, we should ever again build Westminster Hall?

Mr. Morrison: I think that my hon. Friend and I would disagree on one point. As far as I am concerned, it is more important to get more people into the right sort of training. For example, thanks to the youth training scheme, in the Construction Industry Training Board area, 18,000 people last year had the first year's training, and 90 per cent. have gone on to further skills training. That has to be good for them and for the industry.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister agree that because of system building and the virtual moratorium on public sector building the prospects of obtaining apprenticeships in the building industry today are poor? What efforts do the Government intend to make to ensure that the building industry is capable of providing apprenticeships for traditional building?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard my last reply, when I said that last year 90 per cent. of the 18,000 participants in the Construction Industry Training Board youth training scheme were taken on by the industry for a further year's training. That is a good record by any standards.

Mr. Penhaligon: Would the Minister allow a young person who had completed the extra year's training to do major construction work on his own property?

Mr. Morrison: That would depend.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend share the growing doubts about the role of the Construction Industry Training Board? Is it not arguable that it is absorbing more in contributions than doing good in training?

Mr. Morrison: If my hon. Friend consulted widely in the construction industry he would discover that the majority of employers still have confidence in the Construction Industry Training Board.

Cumbria (MSC Operations)

12. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will undertake a review of the Manpower Services Commission's operations within the county of Cumbria.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am not aware of any need for such a review, but I would be happy to hear from the hon. Member about any particular matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In any decision taken nationally to increase the number of community programme places, will the Minster pay special attention to Cumbria, and to my constituency, where unemployment is over 20 per cent.? Does he accept that in a constituency where it is difficult to attract footloose industry the community programme is of special importance? In the discussions that take place annually with the Chancellor of the Exchequer before the Budget, has anything been said about the community programme for this financial year?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman and I have corresponded and we have discussed matters relating to his constituency and the community programme. I have watched carefully. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is only fair for the number of places in his part of the country to reflect the total number of unemployed as a percentage of the whole.

Community Programme

13. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what would be the net cost of expanding the community programme to 500,000 places, taking into account benefit savings and tax flows.

Mr. Tom King: On the 1984-85 basis, it is estimated that the gross cost of mounting a 500,000 place scheme would be £2,200 million. It is likely that such a significant expansion of the scheme would require changes in the rules and would be likely to result in rather higher net costs than the present estimate of some £2,200 per unemployed person.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Secretary of State agree that the deprivations and hardships of unemployment worsen and grow the longer a person is out of work? Does he also agree that the figures for the long-term unemployed are growing alarmingly from month to month, and that the figures that he has announced today show that we could take about 500,000 people off the dole queues for an amount similar to that which the Chancellor suggests he will give away in the next Budget? Should not the Secretary of State therefore insist that the money be spent on expanding the community programme to help the long-term unemployed, instead of giving it away in cuts in income tax?

Mr. King: The increase in the number of people in jobs is a result of the Government keeping control of inflation and public expenditure. It is important, when carrying forward any programme in which the Government have a number of measures to help in the short term, that we do not allow the costs to rise out of proportion.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Is it not important to improve training aspects in the programme so that those who leave the programme are better qualified to find work?

Mr. King: I have announced the proposal to introduce training into the community programme in the coming year. I am encouraged by the first results, which show that people who have been on community programme schemes have three times as good a prospect of going on into work as other long-term unemployed people. That is a tribute to the quality of the programme.

Job Creation

14. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what studies his Department has made recently into methods whereby new public works schemes can give rise to new job creation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government's approach to public works programmes is to consider each one on its merits in terms of rate of return to the community. It is our view that spending on Government investment schemes would be a very expensive way to create jobs.

Mr. Dykes: Nevertheless, will my hon. Friend undertake to look at this again, perhaps in a joint study with the Treasury, in view of the growing evidence that there would be a very good effect on the multiplier in comparison with tax cuts?

Mr. Clark: I do not know what my hon. Friend means by "growing evidence". To take the construction industry, investment last year increased by 12 per cent. and output by 4·25 per cent., yet employment went down. I know that in my hon. Friend's early-day motion dated 17 December 1984 he referred to a large injection of capital being desirable, but he did not suggest where it should come from.

Wages Inspectors

16. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to reduce the number of wages inspectors in post.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No, Sir.

Mr. Lamond: Has the Minister noticed that hon. Members behind him who are quickest to respond when their own interests are affected by Government action are the first to call for the abolition of the wages councils and the removal of protection from the lowest-paid members of our society? Does the Minister feel ashamed to be spearheading a Government whose proposals are to do just that? Is there any compassion at all left in his Department?

Mr. Bottomley: Except for the hon. Gentleman's last question, the answer is no.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in all this talk of victors and vanquished in the mining tragedy, the achievement of modern mines, high productivity and competitive energy prices will be the true victory for Britain and for Britain's miners, for whom Conservative Members retain, despite all that has happened, the greatest respect?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend that we want a prosperous coal industry. It is therefore necessary for the industry as a whole to convince the customer that it can provide a secure supply at highly competitive prices.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Prime Minister aware that the miners' strike is not yet over, because the Scottish miners in pits such as Polmaise are as determined as ever not to go back until they get an assurance on the future of their pits and the reinstatement of all miners sacked during the strike? Will the Prime Minister stop demanding her full pound of flesh and insisting that miners be punished twice for the same alleged offence—first by the law courts and then by the kangaroo courts of MacGregor and Wheeler? It is they who should be sacked for vandalising the coal industry.

The Prime Minister: With certain exceptions, and the hon. Gentleman refers to one, the return to work in the coal mines has been orderly and at a high rate. The strike is very nearly over and I hope that the mines will soon get back to normal working, because that is the way to build a highly competitive industry again. I do not think that there can be an amnesty in any way for those who have committed serious criminal offences.

Q2. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Walker: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that despite the appalling problems that have been created by the miners' strike there has been a great sense of unity in other sections of the nation and productivity has increased dramatically, particularly in the steel industry at Ravenscraig in Scotland? Is this not an example which the coal industry should now emulate?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the workers at Ravenscraig on their most excellent record throughout the coal strike. Indeed, we should congratulate the steel workers as a whole, who put up production last year in spite of the coal strike. I also agree with my hon. Friend that the strike has demonstrated the enormous unity of other workers in the country, who are determined to carry on with their own jobs.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Prime Minister reflect a little on the answer that she gave a moment ago in relation to the amnesty? While her Secretary of State for Energy says that it would be wrong to ask men to go back to work with those who have committed serious offences, will she take cognisance of the fact that in the Comrie colliery in Fife and Castlehill colliery and Solgirth, which are part of the Longannet complex, my men and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) are saying that they will not go back to work until the men who led the strike and who have been convicted, often of minor offences, are told that they are able to return to employment? Will she use her good offices with the NCB in Scotland to ensure that we do not have a Pontius Pilate school of management, but management that allows men to go back to work in unity and with self-respect?

The Prime Minister: Serious criminal acts have been committed during the dispute against both persons and property of working miners, and against the property of the National Coal Board. People who commit such acts must expect to face the consequences. Other matters are for the management of the NCB. The hon. Gentleman is very well aware that when normal working is restored there is a procedure through which anyone can go if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Needham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only solution to the teachers' strike is through conciliation and arbitration, and that without the introduction of the new assessment procedure the only way that money will become available is either through higher local government rates or fewer teachers?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting across that point. If there is to be extra money for teachers, it could come by having fewer teachers, or it could come from elsewhere, out of the education budget, or the expenditure budget. To give more than has been offered to those teachers would in fact mean cutting other people off from jobs.

Dr. Owen: While Lord Bridge is investigating specific cases of ministerial authorisation of phone tapping, who will investigate the allegations that MI5 may have gone beyond the authorisation and made phone taps without specific ministerial authorisation? Will the Prime Minister make it clear that there has been no change in the practice of making individual assessments about phone tapping, other than offices, and that there is no blanket phone-tapping authorisation?

The Prime Minister: I hope to be studying the result of Lord Bridge's inquiry later this evening. It has arrived, but I have not in fact seen it. With regard to any other allegations, for example of unauthorised interception, I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary are accountable to Parliament for the work of the security service. It is for us to satisfy ourselves that it conducts its operations strictly in accordance with the terms of its directive and that its responsibility is fully discharged, as it always has been.

Q3. **Mr. Parry** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Parry: Will the Prime Minister reflect today on the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, which she quoted outside 10 Downing Street on being elected Prime Minister? Does she not agree that she has stood that great prayer on its head, and that where there was faith, there is now doubt, where there was hope, there is now despair, where there was pardon, there is now injury, and where there was joy, there is now sadness? If the right hon. Lady has any compassion, which I do not believe she has, will she consider an amnesty for miners who were defending their jobs, communities and families? Will the right hon. Lady have compassion for their families and children? If she does not, she will go down to posterity as a cruel, vindictive, ruthless and uncaring hypocrite.

The Prime Minister: The worst discord that this country has seen for a very long time has been created by the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers. It has split its own union and set family against family, brother against brother, and miner against miner. With regard to the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, there can be no amnesty for serious criminal offences.

Q4. **Mr. Fox** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fox: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to condemn the scurrilous contents of the full page advertisement in *The Times*, which was inserted by the drug companies? Is it not disgraceful that those with a vested interest—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes".]—should prey upon the fears of the sick and the elderly in this fashion?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend that it is disgraceful that they should prey upon the fears of elderly people, who will continue to receive the drugs that they need on the National Health Service, even though they might be in a slightly different form from that to which they have been accustomed. It is the chemical, not the brand name, which creates the cure.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the fact that the rate of male unemployment in the South Wales coalfield and other similar areas is now 20 per cent. and more, will the Prime Minister tell us precisely what she is going to do to reduce unemployment in those areas?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman is referring particularly to closures that may come about because of the situation in the mining industry, I can tell him that a special National Coal Board enterprise company has been set up. Should it not have sufficient resources, more will be provided.

Mr. Kinnock: I am talking about the unemployment that already exists, not just about what will happen when the Prime Minister's axe falls upon even more mining communities. Will she tell us how she can justify, in these conditions of very high unemployment, further cuts in her own programme of job creation, training schemes and regional aid? Is it not a fact that the Prime Minister's whole record is one of wiping out jobs and closing down communities?

The Prime Minister: We shall get extra jobs when ordinary people can create more enterprise, which produces goods and services that people will buy. That is the way in which it has been done in countries that have been successful. We should have a far greater chance of reducing unemployment if right hon. and hon. Gentlemen

ceased to support strikes and increased pay claims, regardless of the effect that this will have upon the jobs of others.

Mr. Kinnock: When — Mr. Speaker, this is the question that the whole country is asking — is this miracle going to come about? Will the Prime Minister answer that question?

The Prime Minister: It will come about when our people, instead of relying upon increased subsidies, do exactly what has happened in both Japan and the United States — set out themselves to create more small businesses.

Q5. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heddle: In the light of the role played by the Trades Union Congress in the mining dispute, does my right hon. Friend recognise that a considerable number of members of trade unions, the majority of whom are moderate and reasonable, now recognise that management has a duty to manage and that discussion invariably succeeds where disruption always fails? Is not this a welcome sea change from the attitude that prevailed 10 years ago?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As my hon. Friend knows, I saw the TUC in the closing days of the strike. It played a very helpful and constructive role. I agree with my hon. Friend that since we have got rid of a lot of regulations in industry as a whole, management has recovered both the right and the duty to manage. That is something upon which we can never compromise.

Mr. Buchan: Does the right hon. Lady recognise that at present management in Scotland is not managing but mismanaging? The disruption that exists in Scotland is caused by one woman, the Prime Minister, and one of her officials, Mr. Wheeler. Will the right hon. Lady kindly tell him to call off his nonsense? He declared that there would be no amnesty, even before the decision to return to work was taken.

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Opposition Front Bench agrees with me that it is right that there should be no amnesty for those who have committed serious criminal offences against miners and against the property of miners and the NCB. The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) also agree with that proposition.

Q6. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Roe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, out of a total of 32 London boroughs, only seven councils supported the Labour GLC in its threat to approve an illegal budget on Thursday? Will she join the majority of Londoners in urging all Labour GLC councillors in their deliberations this afternoon on the estimates to adjust the GLC budget so that it does not exceed the limits set down by the Government?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the GLC, ILEA and all other relevant councils will make it their duty to set a legal rate, otherwise services will not be delivered and there will be chaos and confusion. Action can be taken to surcharge councillors and disqualify them. I hope that that will not happen.

Mr. Speaker: Application under Standing Order No. 10, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody.

Mr. Crouch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unless the point of order arises directly out of questions, I shall take it after the Standing Order No. 10 application.

Mr. Crouch: It arises out of questions. I wonder whether you have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that questions to the Prime Minister today were proceeding quite well notwithstanding the fact that some hon. Members referred to their notes and were called upon not do so. I do not consider that to be as much a sin as the Leader of the Opposition popping up and down so often to ask his questions. This is a Back Benchers' occasion. Do you not think, Mr. Speaker, that we should try to observe Prime Minister's Question Time as a Back Bench occasion?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair has always given a certain licence to the Front Bench at Prime Minister's Question Time, but it remains true that every time the Front Bench gets up a Back Bencher cannot be called.

Transport Bill
(Committee Proceedings)

3.32 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the report of the Select Committee on Transport and its conclusions on the Transport Bill which is currently in Committee."

This matter is specific because the Transport Committee report, from an all-party Committee, clearly damns the legislation. It talks about dangers to safety standards, where there will undoubtedly be a need for a considerable increase in already inadequate resources. It points out that concessionary fare passes are unlikely to be feasible under unfettered competition—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important application under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot hear the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Select Committee fears wasteful and unsafe competitive practices.

It is vital that the House should debate the report, because the Committee stage is being pushed ahead without hon. Members having any opportunity to discuss the implications of the report. The matter is even more important because, if the Bill is passed without the Select Committee's report having been discussed, we shall not have the advantage of the helpful and informative evidence, including that of Ministers, given to the Committee. The matter is urgent because today it was linked with a most extraordinary attack by the Under-Secretary on the Chairman of the Select Committee. It was a disgraceful attack on the integrity and chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans). My hon. Friend's only crime is that he obviously knows a great deal more about transport than the Minister.

The Committee consists of seven Tory Members and three Labour Members, one of whom is the Chairman and does not use his casting vote, except in the normal way to maintain the status quo. Yet today in Committee the Under-Secretary of State suggested in the most appalling manner that the Chairman has misused his responsibilities to change the contents of the report. It is vital that the House should have the chance to debate what is in the Select Committee report because Ministers are anxious that the legislation should go by without people realising the extent and damaging contents of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely.

"the report of the Select Committee on Transport and its conclusions on the Transport Bill which is currently in Committee."

As the hon. Lady knows, the only decision that I have to take is whether this matter should take precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter she has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit her application to the House.

Later—

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance about an incident that happened in Standing Committee A this morning. The Committee was dealing with the Transport Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has referred briefly to the disgraceful attack on the character and integrity of my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport. During debate on the sittings motion this morning, reference was made to the Select Committee's report——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman, because I cannot rule in this Chamber on anything that happens in Standing Committee. It is not for me to do so. The hon. Gentleman must put to me a question that I can answer. I cannot rule on anything that happens in a Standing Committee.

Mr. Dixon: I am not asking for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but for your guidance. What should members of Standing Committees do when Ministers attack hon. Members who are not members of the Standing Committee? The Select Committee's report was referred to during debate on the sittings motion this morning. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) said that the report was carried on the casting vote of the Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge. The Minister, when winding up the debate on the sittings motion——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now doing exactly what I asked him not to do. I cannot deal with anything that goes on in a Standing Committee. That is not a matter for me. The matter is well outside the responsibilities of this Chair and our rules here.

Mr. Dixon: If it is not a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, can you tell hon. Members where they can raise the matter so that hon. Members who are not members of a Standing Committee should not have their character or integrity attacked by a Minister? To whom can the members of the Committee go for guidance?

Mr. Speaker: I can answer that question very easily. The hon. Gentleman should take the matter up with the Chairman of the Standing Committee.

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that it was the House, not one political party, that set up the procedures of the Select Committees. The idea was that the Committees should be all-party Committees and should take evidence from all sources and reach a view. I am not complaining, but I cannot think of one Select Committee that does not have a built-in Conservative majority.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on the following point. The wishes of the House should be obeyed and the Select Committees should have the freedom to reach a balanced view. Is not that situation put in jeopardy when the integrity of the Chairman is challenged, from whatever source and on whatever view? An attack on me is an attack on every Select Committee Chairman, who should, in carrying out the wishes of the House, be free to chair that Committee and to reach a conclusion whether or not the Government of the day happen to agree with it. If that

[Mr. Harry Cowans]

freedom does not exist, is there any future for the Select Committees, or are the Chairmen under direction to meet with the Government's—any Government's—desires?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know about what the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) has said, but I will say—and the whole House will agree—that he is a man of the highest integrity. I would be very surprised if any accusations to the contrary were ever made. Let us move on.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a lot of business ahead of us.

Mr. Leadbitter: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. What happened this morning was a serious matter. I note your kind remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans). Nevertheless, according to Standing Orders, the conduct or misconduct of an hon. Member in Standing Committee is not something that the Standing Committee or its Chairman can deal with. The Standing Orders make it abundantly clear that, if the offending words are not withdrawn, the matter should properly be reported to the House. I accept that the matter cannot be proceeded with at the moment, but I suggest that if my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge still feels offended—that is the conditional purport of what I am saying—the matter should be the subject of a proper report to the House unless the hon. Gentleman who used the offending words withdraws them in the Standing Committee. Subject to that proviso, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will accept a report, if the principals involved in the matter feel that a report should be made.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman helps us out of a difficulty. He is a distinguished Chairman of Committees and he is, of course, quite right.

Miners (Dismissal)

3.37 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"directives from the National Coal Board in Scotland, supported by Ministers, which have led to the arbitrary dismissal of 185 miners."

The matter is specific, because, on the pretext of misconduct, these miners—many in my constituency—have been dismissed and up to 200 more may be dismissed without adequate explanation or proper justification, wholly against previous practice in the coal industry and stated procedures in the rest of the country.

The matter is important because, contrary to what the Prime Minister told us today, some of the miners who have been dismissed in Scotland have been admonished and fined no more than £10 for taking coal and no more than £50 for the most trivial breach of the peace offences committed far from Coal Board premises and involving no violence against fellow miners. Although those miners have hitherto had an impeccable record in the eyes of the law, the National Coal Board in Scotland, with the public support of the Secretary of State for Scotland, has refused even to consider a review of such cases. It is a Scottish policy which, on the admission of the coal board director, may include sackings by the coal board even before summonses by the court, coal board dismissals even when there have been court acquittals and coal board checks and surveillance of miners not at their work place but at home in their villages and towns.

The dismissals are arbitrary because the coal board in Scotland has offered us no criteria for what constitutes a sackable offence; anomalous because miners have been punished twice for the same crime, and authoritarian because the diktat of one man, the NCB director in Scotland, determines whether a man will have his job or lose it. The NCB has found in some trivial offences a pretext for the selective dismissal of active trade unionists.

The matter is important because there are now two types of law—a criminal law, and now a coal board law; magistrates' justice, and now MacGregor's justice; a coal board blacklist of people in 1985 after a coal board hit list of pits in 1984. Throughout the past year, we have had industrial relations not by negotiation but by starvation. We now have management not by conciliation but by victimisation. Yet, in the midst of such victimisation, this week the Prime Minister has the effrontery to talk of reconciliation. Miners in my constituency would feel safer with Viscount Whitelaw wielding his gun than with the Prime Minister wielding her olive branch.

The matter requires urgent consideration because today the Scottish coal board is shamefully impeding the settlement of the coal dispute, misleading the public over the reasons for these selective dismissals, abusing any common-sense view of natural justice and permanently injuring any efforts at the reconciliation that the coal board says it wants to achieve.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the

House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"directives from the National Coal Board in Scotland, supported by Ministers, which have led to the arbitrary dismissal of 185 miners."

I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman, but I have to give him the same answer which I gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Interception of Communications Bill (Bridge Report)

3.40 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice and assistance in your role as guardian of the rights of the House. You will recall that last Thursday, in the guise of an answer to a planted supplementary question, the Home Secretary announced the setting up of an inquiry by Lord Bridge of Harwich into certain aspects of telephone tapping. I asked, in the light of that inquiry, that the Interception of Communications Bill should not be proceeded with. The Home Secretary replied that that was a matter for the Leader of the House.

Accordingly, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue at business questions that same day. The Leader of the House replied:

"I understand the importance which the right hon. Gentleman attaches to the Bridge inquiry—I am sure that the whole House believes it to be important—and the desirability of his findings being available before the Second Reading of the Bill. We shall keep an eye on that matter through the usual channels."

The right hon. Gentleman made similar responses to other hon. Members. For example, in reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) he said:

"The hon. Gentleman will have noted the tone of my reply to the Leader of the Opposition and I hope that he will have been encouraged by it."

To my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), he said:

"The Leader of the Opposition has made representations to me about the desirability of having the Bridge report before Second Reading, and I responded to that in, I thought, a forthcoming fashion."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1985; Vol. 74, c. 471-2, 475, 479.]

The Interception of Communications Bill is down for Second Reading tomorrow. The Bridge report has not yet been made available to the House, and, as far as I am aware, will not be made available to the House until tomorrow, only a few hours at best before the Second Reading debate starts. At Question Time this afternoon——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With the greatest respect, the right hon. Gentleman knows that I am not responsible for the business put before the House. If he would kindly make a point of order that I can answer, I shall do my best to answer it.

Mr. Kaufman: That is what I am seeking to do, Mr Speaker, but I thought it only proper to put before you and the House the evidence on which I wish to base my point of order.

The Prime Minister, at Question Time only this afternoon, confirmed that she has already received the report and that she will be studying it this evening. The Government will have the time and the opportunity to study the report before preparing their arguments for the debate, but the rest of the House, of whose rights you, Mr. Speaker, are the custodian, will not have the opportunity of studying that report while preparing for the debate. Therefore, the balance of the debate and of the House will be disturbed because other Members of the House, apart from the Home Secretary, will be placed at an intolerable disadvantage in relation to the Government.

[Mr. Kaufman]

The spirit of the assurances given by the Leader of the House on the matter, which I quoted, will have been violated. As a result, the debate will be seriously distorted. It is essential that this controversial Bill, whose content and circumstances are fundamental to freedom in our society, be properly debated by all Members of the House of Commons on either side. Therefore, I ask for your advice on how we can secure the postponement of the Second Reading of the Bill until the House has had sufficient time properly to study the contents of the Bridge report.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks for my guidance on this matter. As I have already said, and as the House will know, it is not a matter for me. The right hon. Gentleman answered his question by directing it to the Leader of the House, who is present. It is not a matter on which I can answer.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As we understand the position, it is your wish to protect the rights of Back-Bench Members. You have said so on numerous occasions, and you said it when you were elected to the Chair. The position with which we are faced—this is why we are seeking your advice—is that tomorrow, when we debate the Second Reading of an important and controversial Bill, a document that is very much related to the content of that Bill and to the debate will not be available until the debate starts. It is right to say that hardly ever, when we have had a Second Reading debate, has a document that it is necessary for right hon. and hon. Members to read and understand not been available until the debate starts. In those circumstances, surely you will agree that it makes a mockery of our procedure and of the debate that is due to take place tomorrow. Therefore, as we have tried the Leader of the House and all possible channels, in the last resort we appeal to you, because you are there, as you have reminded us, to protect our rights. Our rights are being abused, and it would be completely wrong for the Bill to be debated tomorrow. [*Interruption.*]

It is all very well for Conservative Members to jeer, but when the civil liberties of our people are at stake—we know of the widespread abuse by MI5 and the special branch—it is all the more important that the entire House should be concerned about this matter, not simply the Labour party.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. You will recall that, at Question Time today, the Prime Minister referred to the Bridge report. Is it not a convention of the House that once a Minister refers to a document, that document shall be laid on the Table so that all hon. Members can consult it? As the Prime Minister said that she had a copy of it, and used it in reference to her answer, is it not her duty now to lay a copy on the Table so that hon. Members can consult it?

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with that point of order before I call the hon. Lady. A document must be laid before the House only if it is quoted by a Minister, not if it is merely referred to.

Ms. Harman: Further to that point of order, Speaker. It is not only Lord Bridge's report that is available and that should be considered before we de the Bill tomorrow; I have not received a reply to my l to the Prime Minister of nine days ago. Since I have been able to obtain answers, I cannot table questio they mention MI5 and it is impossible for me properl consider the Bill unless I know whether my telephone been tapped and what is in my MI5 file. The Pr Minister is obviously so busy reading my file that she c not have time to answer my letter.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Fur to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If it is difficul protect the rights of Back-Bench Members – understand the difficulty—could I appeal to yo protect the rights of former Home Secretaries? The Pr Minister properly asked former Prime Ministers and H Secretaries whether they would agree to have teleph tapping arrangements in their period of office consid by Lord Bridge. Of course, the report will go first to Prime Minister. It is on her desk and she will not rea until tonight. The debate, which is tomorrow afterno will consider a period of office other than that of the Pr Minister. The report will not be available until tomor morning. Surely the Leader of the House will mak statement. This is not just any other little piece business; this is a constitutional Bill which will be deb entirely on the Floor of the House. We must have the r to see that report in exactly the same way as the Pr Minister has the right to see it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that p of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that abo fortnight ago the Government foolishly tried to telesc two stages of the Transport Bill and attempted to take Committee and Report stages together. That atte resulted in a series of points of order being raised by h Members who felt that an injustice was being d especially as insufficient time had been provided for tabling of amendments.

It appears that the House is now being placed similar predicament. You will recall, Mr. Speake because you were heavily involved in the matter— when statements were made about a change of busin you felt it necessary to remain in the Chair—no allow Mr. Deputy Speaker to take over—because thought that the House of Commons was being place some difficulty.

I will not go into the detail of what happened after t points of order had been raised on that occasion. You have gathered from what has been said today, Speaker, that many of my hon. Friends feel that we about to witness tomorrow the Second Reading of a which we shall not be able adequately to debate bec of the absence of the document to which reference been made, and therefore the inability of hon. Mem to digest its contents.

While I am unable to forecast what may occur, clear that many hon. Members who are hostile to the process of tomorrow's debate feel that it is an affront least to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Ho who can change the business of the House eight time three weeks—and do so at various times of the day night, including at 10 o'clock—should not have the and decency to stand at the Dispatch Box now and n the matter clear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for his concern for my position—*[Interruption.]* I mean it. I do my best to defend the interests of Back Benchers. Among the many responsibilities which I bear, the organisation of the business of the House is not one. There is therefore nothing I can do about that; the matter is in other hands.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to my original point of order, Mr. Speaker, and in relation to what you have said in answer to me and to other points made by my hon. Friends, I recall that, at an earlier stage of this series of points of order, you gave what appeared to be a broad hint—I apologise for saying so, if such a matter never crossed your mind — that the House could be helped out of its difficulty by the Leader of the House making a statement from the Dispatch Box about the Government's intentions. The right hon. Gentleman sits in his place. I think he is awake. I suggest that it would be courteous to you, after what you have said, if the right hon. Gentleman now rose and announced that the Bill will not be proceeded with tomorrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not able to do what the right hon. Gentleman suggests, and I hope that any facial expressions of mine do not betray my emotions. I may have private thoughts, but I do not express them.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I wish to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, a point of order which relates to a letter that I received today from the Home Secretary. It is on the subject of the tapping of hon. Members' telephones. The letter states that the rules governing the tapping of our phones were laid down in a parliamentary answer on 17 November 1966, when the then Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson of Rievaulx

"said that he had given instructions that there was to be no tapping of the telephones of Members of Parliament; that remained the policy of the Government, and that, if there was a development which required a change in the general policy, he would, at such moment as seemed compatible with the security of the country, on his own initiative make a statement in the House about it. The Government regard this undertaking as applying to both postal and telephone interception."

My understanding is that that reply puts the Government in a position in which they are not required to make a statement about the tapping of an hon. Member's phone.

When, a few days ago, in a supplementary question to a question asked by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) I asked what the current position was, the Home Secretary appeared to be changing the rules, when he replied:

"if such telephone interception were to become necessary or desirable, a statement would be made to the House before it was done."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1985; Vol. 74, c. 461.]

To many of us, that clearly meant that a change in the rules was occurring, and we left the Chamber in the belief that the Home Secretary was making a concession. In the letter which I received this morning from the Home Secretary, he has re-established the original rules and has asked me to table a question to elicit that response from him.

Is it not an abuse of procedure for the Home Secretary to ask an Opposition Member to place a question on the Order paper so that he can re-establish a policy to which a majority of the House would take wholesale exception?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say that that is an abuse of the House, but perhaps it is unusual.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Further to the point of order. It seems from what has been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and others, and from undertakings given last week about the nature of the debate and the discussions that would take place, that the House will be in an extraordinary position when we embark upon the Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill tomorrow. We shall not know the Government's response to all the appeals that have been made. Secondly, we shall not be aware of what is in the Bridge report, which is bound to be involved in the debate.

I put to you, Mr. Speaker, a matter which I am sure it is within your province to consider. In view of the exceptional circumstances, the background to tomorrow's debate and the fact that great sections of the House will be denied the right to debate the Bill properly, I ask that at an early stage in the debate you consider a motion for the Adjournment of the House. That would be a matter for you to consider, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That is something that I shall consider at the time.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I appreciate that the business of the House does not lie with you, Mr. Speaker, but there is a matter that I wish to add to those which have been raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and some of my hon. Friends. It seems that we are not to have before us a valuable report that will become the property of Parliament. It appears that it will be available to us only a few hours before tomorrow's important debate. A number of us have felt offended over a number of years by the growing practice of handing out reports with press notices long before the reports become available to hon. Members. As you are the guardian of our rights, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that it is for you to ensure that no hon. Member is denied a privilege that is given to someone outside this place. Members of the press should not be given reports before they are given to hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has raised a matter on which I have frequently given my view in the past. If information is given to the press and it is embargoed, it should not be used before hon. Members have it in their possession.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I recognise, as I did last week, the desire throughout the House that the Bridge report should be made available ahead of the debate tomorrow. I shall ensure that it is available to the House tomorrow morning. Perhaps the matter could be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Kaufman: The Leader of the House has intervened in an attempt to defuse the justifiable concern of the House. However, the House remains in the same difficulty. The Government are in possession of the Bridge report and members of the Government, including the Home Secretary, will be able to study the report this evening. They will be able to prepare for the debate in the full knowledge of the contents of the report. At an unspecified hour tomorrow, with only a short time to pass before the debate starts, the Government will condescend to consider whether and at what time they will place the report in the hands of the other 649 Members. That sort

[Mr. Kaufman]

of approach is not satisfactory to the House of Commons. If the report is not to be made available to Parliament until tomorrow, the Second Reading of the Bill should not take place tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Unfortunately, I can do nothing about that, as the matter is not in my province. Representatives of the usual channels are present and I am sure that the matter will be resolved satisfactorily.

Mr. Foot: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What the Leader of the House has said does not resolve the situation at all. In some ways, what he says makes it worse. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that there has been strong pressure that the debate should be postponed. That case is all the stronger now that we are told that a report is to be presented at some unspecified time.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot solve the problem for the House. I am sure that you would if you could, here and now. However, I put it to you that it would be possible for some hon. Member, at the beginning of the debate tomorrow, to move that the debate should be adjourned. The question whether that motion were accepted would then rest with you. I ask you to give sympathetic consideration to such a motion, if it is moved at the beginning of the debate, so that the overwhelming and just desire of the House should be met through your action.

Mr. Speaker: At the moment, the right hon. Gentleman's proposition is hypothetical. I have already said that, should that eventuality arise, I would of course consider it. In the meantime, there is a hopeful sign that the matter will be discussed, and I hope resolved, in the usual way in which we do such things.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I told my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House the other day that I thought that we should be given the report before the debate. The Government should be congratulated on having the report produced so quickly. The report has been produced in a few days—more quickly than any other during my time in the House.

There are very good printing machines in the House. I suggest that since the report is now before the Prime Minister, we might do better than tomorrow morning. A certain number of copies might be printed tonight and given to Front Bench spokesmen and any other hon. Members who cared to go to the Vote Office. The number might not be large, but some reports would be made available later this afternoon or early this evening.

Mr. Speaker: That is a very good suggestion, as long as the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that I should do the reproduction.

Scottish Parliament

4.8 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I beg to m

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establ democratically elected Scottish Assembly with legislativ administrative powers to deal with all matters at p administered by the Secretary of State for Scotland and powers of the Secretary of State for Education and Science far as they apply to Scotland; such Assembly to have tax r powers; and for connected purposes.

We live in a centralised state—a state in whic legislative power is concentrated here and practical genuine administrative power is concentrated i Government of the day. The process of centralisatio been accelerated and the situation made worse b present Government through their policies on government.

It has always been my view and the view of the L party in Scotland that the establishment of a Sc assembly would be the first step towards a decentralised state in which decisions were take people locally. If other areas of the country assemblies similar to that which I seek to establi Scotland, with exactly the same powers, includin raising powers, I believe that they should be granted assemblies. I and my colleagues would support s move.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian Home Robertson) moved a similar Bill last week be this is the sixth anniversary of the referendum assembly in Scotland. He observed that 52 per ce those who voted in the referendum voted in favo establishing an assembly. The assembly was lost because of the iniquitous 40 per cent. rule. The Sc National party voted with the Conservatives to brin Labour Government down, the Conservatives returned and they quickly forgot the promises tha made in their election manifestos of 1970, 1974 and the referendum campaign. Lord Home of the Hirse that he would urge the introduction of a Bill to give power to a Scottish assembly.

It is right for us to raise the issue of devolution time of year to show that it is not dead. Anyone watched Scottish television, read the Scottish pre listened to Scottish radio last week would have convinced that the issue is far from dead. Indeed, in in devolution is growing. If the House continues to i the legitimate demands of the Scottish people, it w so at its long-term peril.

We are celebrating the anniversary of the refere and the centenary of the establishment of the Secret State for Scotland, or rather the Secretary for Scotl the office was known when it was established in 188 Secretary for Scotland and about 10 others ran wh known as the Scotch Office. During the past 100 yea Secretary of State has gradually acquired powers. In he became a member of the Cabinet, and it was before he became a Secretary of State, although eve he was paid less than other Secretaries of State. Sinc Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State and Minist State have been added. In 1939, the headquarters Scottish Office was moved to Edinburgh — Conservative Government. The Scottish Office gradually acquired powers from other Department now has 10,000 civil servants. All of those power

been given grudgingly. It would be fitting to add the democratic element this year. That would give the Scottish people the right to control their own affairs.

The present Secretary of State is not elected by the Scottish people. His party has only 21 seats out of a possible 72 in Scotland. He runs an enormous administration without a mandate from the people of Scotland. I am not suggesting that the Government have no mandate. The people of Scotland have been denied their democratic rights for too long.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Rubbish.

Mr. Maxton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would be more prepared to listen to a quotation:

"I would never adopt the view that Scotland should be forced into the serfdom of socialism as a result of a vote in the House of Commons".

That was said by Mr. Winston Churchill in the Usher Hall in Edinburgh during the 1950 general election campaign. It is a complete denial of the argument that Parliament is sovereign over the affairs of Scotland. If it was right for Mr. Churchill to say that in 1950, it must be even more right for the Scottish people to say that the tyranny of Thatcherism should not be imposed on Scotland by votes in this House.

You know the procedures of the House, Mr. Speaker. Practically only Scottish Members speak on Scottish Bills, comprise the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the Scottish Grand Committee and Standing Committees on Scottish matters. Yet legislation peculiar to Scotland is carried by a majority, which includes hon. Members who come from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. There must be a Conservative majority in Standing Committees on Scottish legislation, so it is impossible for the Government to get through more than one Scottish Bill at a time as they have insufficient Scottish Back Benchers to man more than one Committee. That process is undemocratic.

There is already much devolution to Scotland. We should continue that process by establishing an elected assembly to consider matters peculiar to Scotland. The logical conclusion of the argument of Conservative Members who are shaking their heads is not to continue with the status quo but to abolish the Scottish Office and disperse its powers to other Departments. My Bill is the best way forward for democratic control of Scottish affairs.

4.18 pm

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Hughes: Am I allowed to register a case for abstention?

Mr. Speaker: Unless the hon. Gentleman is opposing the Bill, I cannot call him.

Mr. Hughes: In that case, I should like formally to oppose the Bill—with deep regret, because I agree with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has said regarding Scotland. However, if such provision is not made available to the north-east of England, the north-west of England and Wales, enabling them to have an adequate status in the realm, I cannot support the Bill.

I have every sympathy with the desires of Scotland to have an elected assembly with tax-raising powers.

We in the northern region have an equal preponderance of Labour Members over Tory Members to that in Scotland, and we should like to look after our own affairs. All the regions need devolution from Whitehall. If we support this Bill, we run the risk that we remain disadvantaged for a decade or more. That is why I and many of my hon. Friends from the north-east were reluctant to support devolution under the Labour Government. Therefore, with deep regret, while I shall not divide the House on the Bill, if it is forced to a Division I shall abstain.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 95, Noes 169.

Division No. 138] **[4.20 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Weetch, Ken
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Canavan and
Mr. Dick Douglas.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cowans, Harry
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dixon, Donald
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Onslow, Cranley
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, Mark *(N*
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tir
Shepherd, Colin *(H*
Shepherd, Richard
Soames, Hon Nich
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dor*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eas*
Stewart, Andrew *(S*
Stradling Thomas,
Taylor, Teddy *(S'en*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon M
Thompson, Donald
Thompson, Patrick
Thurnham, Peter
Tinn, James
Townsend, Cyril D.
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon
Walden, George
Warren, Kenneth
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George
Younger, Rt Hon G

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bill Walker an
Lord James Dougla

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Food and Environment Protection Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

4.31 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I know that there is great interest in the Bill from varying points of view, so it might be best if I deal with its general background and broad principles in my opening speech. I have no doubt that detailed points will be raised, many of which we will have to deal with in Committee and to many of which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, who has specific departmental responsibilities for parts I and III, will respond if she catches your eye for the wind-up speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Bill deals with the three distinct subjects of contamination of food, deposits in the sea and pesticides. Although these each raise widely differing questions, there are important common threads running through the Bill in the protection of the environment and its living resources, the protection of food and the protection of human health. This range of subject matter serves to underline the fact that my Department's responsibilities run wider than purely agriculture, fisheries and food. In particular, we are responsible for a number of major environmental issues, and we take our responsibilities very seriously. The fact that we are legislating in this area demonstrates my Department's continuing strong concern for environmental issues and its willingness to recognise the need for changes and to take action upon them when that is shown to be necessary.

Much concern is expressed nowadays about the need for greater protection of the environment. In this Bill we have identified certain priorities, and are taking action which we believe to be desirable and at the same time practical. Such action must clearly take account of the need not only to protect the environment, but to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on our industries. Although a balance needs to be struck, these two considerations are not as much in conflict as is sometimes argued. We believe that a basically free market economy works best within a reasonable regulatory framework. It is always a question of getting the right balance. At the same time the "polluter pays" principle is of importance in ensuring that environmentally correct signals are given. It is also true that environmental protection is feasible only in co-operation with technological and economic developments rather than in conflict with them. I believe that the Bill is consistent with those principles.

To return to the free market issue, let me say specifically that part III on pesticides is designed to strengthen raher than weaken that market. Our existing arrangements were excellent in themselves, but they did not take enough account of the need for pesticides products to be traded freely across national frontiers when they were known to be safe — a topic in which the European Community Commission began quite properly to interest itself.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): It might be worth call the attention of my hon. Friend and of the House to the that the alleged green parties, those of the alliance, h not bothered to have a single Member in attendance in important debate. That probably gives some indicatio how it arrives at its calculations.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a good po which I hope is fully recognised outside the Hou Further, I stress that there is wide attendance on Government Benches, which I think demonstrates interest.

As a result of the Bill, we will for the first time h the powers we need to exclude products which have been approved here, but both traders and farmers will h available a rapid clearance system when they wish import pesticides which are identical to products whic contrast we have already approved. I believe that balance this will not amount to an artificial restriction trade, but rather the reverse, since the interest of farm and small traders is in finding low-priced sources of w known products for which approval will be rea available.

The Government's objective is to ensure that h standards of environmental protection are set. As I s explain, each part of the Bill has a firm foundatio existing practice or legislation, but we have neverthe concluded that some further attention is needed in all th of them. Our aim is to set a high standard for the year come, and I hope that the House will agree that the is a major step forward.

Part I would provide greater protection to the publi the event of food becoming unsuitable for consump following a release of harmful substances. I should exp the background. The Government have reviewed existing procedures for ensuring the safety of food, that review has revealed a gap in our legislative pow Were there to be a serious emission of danger substances — such as, for example, the accident Seveso in 1976—the Government at present would h no power in law to take precautionary measures safeguard the public's food. They would be unable, example, to prohibit the sale of food in the affected while its safety was being checked. Part I would close legal gap.

I must make it quite clear that the powers here wo be activated only in serious emergencies, where th appeared to be a threat to the safety of food; they wo not be used in relatively minor cases of contaminatio food where there is no need to supplement the exis powers of local authorities. When responding emergencies in the past we have relied on volun arrangements, and these have worked well on the very occasions they have been used. An example was sinking of the Aeolian Sky off Portland Bill in 1979, a carrying highly toxic chemicals. The Government ha statutory powers to act on that occasion. The fact tha are now taking such statutory powers does not mean we expect a serious incident. We do, however, regard power to take safeguarding measures as a pru insurance policy.

One of the most important features of part I is tha procedures could be operated very quickly—if neces within hours — and over whatever area was involv Clause 1 provides for emergency orders which wo contain provisions prohibiting any or all of the activi

[Mr. MacGregor]

listed in schedule 1. Emergency orders would come into effect immediately but would require affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament in order to continue beyond 28 days.

After an emergency order had been made, clause 2 would give Ministers the power to give directions as to how unsuitable foodstuffs should be dealt with. It is important to appreciate that emergency orders would contain prohibitions wherever ministerial directions would generally require people to do things.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The Minister has mentioned clause 1 and the fact that emergency orders can be introduced quickly and will contain prohibitions. As he will know, they are approved by the affirmative procedure, which gives no powers of amendment. In those circumstances, will he consider the possibility of producing model regulations before any eventuality so that they could be the subject of consultation?

Mr. MacGregor: I should be willing to consider that and we can discuss it in Committee. The difficulty is that we do not know precisely what we will face on some occasions. We shall have to apply our minds to that. If my hon. Friend is on the Committee, perhaps he will raise the matter again.

I was talking about clause 2. It would be possible to give directions after the expiry of the emergency order in case food that had been rendered unsuitable by the incident subsequently came to light, or if new scientific information became available suggesting that further action was desirable.

Clause 3 deals with the authorisation of investigating officers and enforcement officers. There is a distinction between the two. Immediately following an incident, investigating officers would advise Ministers on whether an emergency order should be made and what should be done under it. That is relevant to the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) because different action might have to be taken under an order on different occasions.

After the emergency order had been made, enforcement officers would enforce the prohibitions contained in it and ensure that Ministers' directions were carried out. The Bill makes a distinction between the two kinds of officers because investigating officers would require greater powers than enforcement officers — in particular, the power to enter premises before an emergency order was made.

Clause 4 and schedule 2 deal with the powers of investigating and enforcement officers. These powers vary according to the type of officer and whether they are used before or after the making of an emergency order.

It might be helpful if I demonstrate briefly how the powers in part I might operate. As soon as the Ministry of Agriculture heard of a serious incident which could affect food in England we would send investigating officers to the scene. They would be specialists from the Ministry's regional organisation and its food science division. They would take samples of crops or food and, if they judged that it was necessary in the circumstances, advise the Minister that an order should be made. My right hon. Friend would then make an order selecting, as appropriate, prohibitions from schedule 1. The order would come into effect immediately, Ministers would have the power under clause 2(3) to issue directions and enforcement officers would then have the power to enforce the prohibitions contained in the order and any directions issued by Ministers. These officers could be drawn from the Ministry's existing staff, but it is also likely that some of them would be local authority officers.

As time went on, it might be possible to relax the application of the restrictions imposed at the start of the emergency by using the power in clause 2(1) which allows Ministers to consent to anything prohibited in an emergency order.

It has been suggested that the Bill should mention local authorities, to make it clear that it does not prejudice their existing responsibilities and to ensure that they are fully involved in any emergency action. We gladly acknowledge the important role which local authorities have played — and will continue to play — in dealing with emergencies and food safety. We would certainly expect them to be actively involved following an incident; indeed, they might well be the first to hear of it. Nothing in the Bill inhibits this in any way and it would be quite unnecessary to lengthen part I to spell it out. Nevertheless, the Government recognise the importance of having administrative arrangements in place as soon as possible after Royal Assent to ensure that, if the powers in the Bill ever had to be used, they could be brought into operation smoothly and effectively. With this in mind, we are holding discussions with local authority organisations and others.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): How will the officers who are investigating be able to differentiate between one product and another? Might there not be an overlap and might not some products be excluded, even though the Minister intended to include them, because of the framing of the order?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that that can be sorted out at the time. The investigating officers would be skilled in dealing with such matters, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman's anxiety will be covered in an emergency.

It has also been suggested that the Bill should provide for Government compensation for those affected by emergency prohibitions. It does not do this, for the simple reason that part I is designed to protect the public from the polluter. The Government are simply seeking power to carry out protective measures that responsible people would in all probability eventually agree to carry out voluntarily. If action taken under the Bill led to any economic loss, compensation should be a matter for the original polluter.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Is not my hon. Friend worried that in a major disaster the polluter might not have the resources to pay compensation? What happens then?

Mr. MacGregor: We can examine that aspect in Committee but insurance is the probable answer.

Part II deals with dumping at sea. Unlike other parts of the Bill, we are in part II bound by the provisions of two international conventions—the Oslo convention and the London dumping convention — and we are amending, rather than introducing, legislation. In 1974, the framework of control over sea dumping set down in the conventions was translated into United Kingdom law by the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. That Act has served us well

for ten years and I cannot stress too strongly that part II does not in any way weaken the control which we now have over dumping. But ten years of operation of the Act have shown us where it is deficient; and ten years of progress under the conventions mean that we need to update it. The changes that we propose are not radical, but they are valuable improvements.

It may be asked why the Bill does not refer specifically to these conventions. The answer is that they impose obligations on Governments, who must then decide on the best method of implementation. Part I achieves this for the United Kingdom, giving Ministers all the necessary powers to fulfil our obligations under the conventions. The very structure of part II—involving testing, licensing, imposing conditions and enforcement—and the criteria against which applications are assessed stem directly from the conventions. Any more explicit reference would be unnecessary.

Clauses 5 and 6 set out the activities for which a licence will be needed. The most significant change here is the introduction in clause 6 of specific controls over incineration at sea. Little marine incineration is done by the United Kingdom, but we must have the means to control it, not least because it is the subject of a protocol to the Oslo convention which the United Kingdom must ratify. Other extensions of control relate to scuttling, deposit from floating containers, and foreign vessels.

The Dumping at Sea Act only controlled the loading of foreign vessels in the United Kingdom and their dumping within three miles if they had loaded there. As foreign vessels are used from time to time, especially for incineration where there are no British ships, it is desirable to extend our control. Under the Bill, licences would be needed for loading as before, and for operations taking place within British fishing limits—200 miles or median lines — where the vessel had loaded in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the power of inspection of foreign vessels is extended out to British fishery limits.

Clause 7 provides power to make an exemption order. This will close a loophole in the 1974 Act, which referred to "permanent" deposits, and enabled people to claim that their operation did not need a licence because the deposit was only "temporary". The Bill therefore in principle covers all deposits, leaving the exemption order to spell out precisely what is exempt. The orders would thus cover activities such as deployment of fishing gear, incidental discharges from ships, and the deposit of human remains. I must stress that clarification is the aim here. There is no question of the power being used to exempt any kind of dumping which should be licensed.

We have not put the exemptions in the Bill because we want to consider the views of those affected before we commit ourselves to legislation. So there will be further wide consultation before the order is made, and my colleagues and I will be taking particular note of what is said in the House this afternoon and subsequently before we get down to drafting.

With clause 8 we come to the licensing procedure—the means by which the conventions are put into effect. We have stuck very closely to what the conventions require and to the Dumping at Sea Act. There are two changes, however. First, we have spelt out more clearly—the Dumping at Sea Act was not very clear on this point—the factors that Ministers may take into account in licensing dumping. Secondly, there are two changes to the provision on licence fees: these are to broaden the basis on which fees may be charged to include monitoring work and to require consultation before fees are fixed.

The next improvement is in clause 10, which is a new power enabling Ministers to take remedial action following illicit dumping and to recover the costs if there has been a conviction. We hope this power will be used only rarely. In some cases remedial action will not be practicable—for example, where the waste was a liquid — while in others it is hoped that those responsible would take any necessary action.

Clause 12 is also new. It gives Ministers power to test oil dispersants and other substances which are used to treat oil spills at sea. Once tested and approved, these will be exempted under clause 7. This is a good example of the way in which the exemption order will be used. It will also considerably simplify the requirements for use of these products.

Clause 13 retains the requirement to keep a public register, which was in the Dumping at Sea Act, but we have now set out in schedule 4 the information which the register must contain. As with many of the changes from that Act, the emphasis is on retaining what we have while making the law clearer.

Part III concerns pesticides. Let me make it clear from the start that with this part of the Bill we would be legislating to control not only agrochemicals but all pesticides covered by the present pesticides safety precautions scheme. This means that we are concerned not only with chemicals used on farms and gardens but also with those used in food stores, factories, sewers, restaurants, kitchens and hospitals to kill pests and protect public health, as well as with those employed to preserve wood in houses and other buildings. I am making this point to emphasise that all of us benefit every day from the use of these products.

The benefits of pesticides are many and obvious, ranging from the eradication of disease to the protection of food, clothes and buildings. The hazards of misuse may not always be so obvious, but for many years successive Governments have recognised the absolute necessity of ensuring that pesticides are used in such a way as to maximise the benefits and to minimise the risks.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): As my hon. Friend knows, there are many fears about part III, particularly because the regulations are not known. He has said how important it is for herbicides to be safe. Is he aware that many herbicides are very volatile and that when a farmer sprays his crop the herbicide can settle on his crop and then, under certain conditions, vaporise and drift over on to the hedgerow and the next-door crop, doing considerable damage to the plant life in the hedgerow and to the other crop? This is obviously a matter of detail, but I should like to have my hon. Friend's opinion at this stage. Would it not be possible to introduce a test of volatility so that only those chemicals which do not vaporise easily can be used?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be saying something in due course about the fact that the regulations are not known. The problem of vapour drift is certainly well known. Many products of the kind that cause some vapour drift have been withdrawn by the industry and labels agreed under the scheme which I referred to earlier—the PSPS—for a

[Mr. MacGregor]

few remaining products include appropriate warnings. But this is certainly a point that we could look at in detail in Committee.

One point that I want to stress in approaching part III is that we should all recognise the excellent safety record of the industry under the scheme. Fatalities have, happily, been kept so low that it must now be possible to aim to eliminate them entirely. I believe that the figure is roughly two or three a year. The poisoning cases investigated in 1983 led to the identification of 12 incidents on the farm, in which 16 members of the public or agricultural workers suffered some chemical poisoning. I give these figures simply to emphasise that the agriculture industry is extremely conscious of the importance of the safety of pesticides, and they show that we have an excellent record.

Nevertheless, the number of concerns we face on pesticides—and I believe that farmers fully recognise this—is increasing. For example, what happens to them in water, in the soil and as residues in food, and what is their effect on beneficial insects? The range of products, the application systems and the possible crop uses are also increasing.

In these circumstances we do not think it possible to depend entirely on a non-statutory system. I believe that we are all agreed that the time has come to put our controls on a statutory footing.

I referred earlier to the important matter of imports, which is of course another reason for doing what we are doing in part III, which consists of only three clauses.

The first, clause 15, was the subject of considerable discussion in another place. It has emerged with several major additions, which we believe can rightly be regarded as improvements. It begins with a few succinct lines which encompass the objectives of part III: to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants; to safeguard the environment; and to secure the safe, efficient and humane use of pesticides.

The remainder of the clause enables Ministers to meet those objectives by providing them with five main powers: first, power to set up an approvals system, including provisions for review, alteration and revocation of approvals; secondly, power to specifiy maximum pesticide residue limits in food, crops or feeding stuffs; thirdly, power to require information in connection with approvals or to fulfil international obligations on exchange of information; fourthly, power to disclose some of the information supplied in support of an approval, subject to certain safeguards; and, finally, the requirement to consult an advisory committee on all aspects of approvals and to consult the Health and Safety Commission about any regulations affecting the health and safety of workers.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): It might be very useful if the hon. Gentleman could say a little more about the projected composition of the advisory committee. Will he ensure that this is not dominated by any particular interest group and that the environmental organisations have a say?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend might wish to say something further about that in winding up. I think it important that the advisory committee contain people who are specialists in these areas and able to bring specialist knowledge to bear. It should not be regarded as a committee that simply represents various interest groups. My hon. Friend is giving a great deal of attention to this aspect and will no doubt wish to say something about it.

Clause 15 also describes the offences and defences relating to this part of the Bill, while clauses 16 and 17 enable Ministers to levy fees from persons seeking approval for a pesticide and provide the appropriate enforcement powers necessary to back up the proposed controls.

I believe that these three clauses constitute a practical and flexible statutory framework which will enable us now and in future to ensure the safe, efficient and humane use of pesticides. These measures would not only provide controls over sale and supply which, through non-statutory agreements, we have had for some time, but for the first time provide powers to control all aspects of the storage, advertisement, use and disposal of pesticides which might impinge not only on safety but also on efficacy and humaneness.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Would my hon. Friend confirm that under these clauses dealing with pesticides new penalties will be available for the control of aerial crop-spraying where pesticides drift on to neighbouring land?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will know that a large part of the control is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. He will recall that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport made further announcements about this in July of last year. I am very much aware that we shall want to consider spraying in detail in Committee and exactly what the Bill offers.

The extension relating to safety is undoubtedly an important step forward. This is, of course, primary legislation, which must and will be followed by implementing regulations.

I now come to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle). My noble Friend the Minster of State assured another place that the regulations will appear later this year. I repeat that assurance. He has tabled a paper that has come to be known as the "statement of intent", which describes the controls that the Government intend to implement. I have arranged for that paper to be updated to take account of the discussions in another place and of the amendments made there to part III. Copies of the revised paper are available in the Vote Office.

There is a further assurance, given before, which I now repeat. We shall consult all interested parties—whether representative or environment groups, consumers, agriculture, food manufacturing, the pesticide industries and, of course, Members of both Houses of Parliament who are interested—once the Bill is passed and before the regulations are drafted in final form.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I apologise for interrupting the Minister, but this matter is central. I do not see how both those assurances can be right. If the regulations are to be enforced by the end of the year and consultations with all parties, which I very much welcome, are to take place, the draft regulations, or the main body of the draft regulations, must have been prepared already. If they have been, why should they not be available to the Committee?

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Would it not be the right way to proceed, as this is a purely enabling

Bill, to draft the regulations first in their entirety, following consultation with the industry, and then bring the Bill forward so that, when we move into Committee, we shall be able to deal with the matter entirely rationally?

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) and of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). The important point is to have enabling powers. After all, we are talking about not just part III, but parts I and II. To ensure that we have them, we are carrying out thorough consultation on the details. If the draft regulations had been drawn up in the form that the hon. Gentleman suggested, we would have made them available. We have made the statement of intent available because we wish to consult — it will be an intensive process — all those interested before we finally draw up the draft regulations.

One other pont is quite important. The statement of intent refers to the areas that the regulations will cover, but they are not drawn up in the detail that the hon. Gentleman has in mind because we want to consult—there is much to be consulted about.

In view of the concern that has been expressed by both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend, we shall listen carefully this afternoon to the views of hon. Members on both sides of the House on how they wish to be consulted in the process of drawing up the draft regulations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do the draft regulations currently exist?

Mr. MacGregor: I thought I had made it clear that the form of draft regulations that the hon. Member for Pontypridd had in mind—which I assume are the draft regulations that will come forward to the House after the Bill receives Royal Assent, if it does—do not exist in that form at present. What exists is the statement of intent, which has been tabled. That exists in a form that can be put before the House, because we are anxious to be as helpful as possible.

Mr. John: With respect, I was not asking that. I think that we are all at one. There is no division across the Floor about the Bill. We want to make it as good as possible. What has been asked of the Minister is not whether regulations exist in a form that will ultimately come before the House—indeed, there would be no virtue in that, as we want an input into the content of those regulations—but whether any regulations, as opposed to a statement of intent, exist in any form at the moment.

Mr. MacGregor: No, we do not have the regulations in a complete form. Obviously, there are some thoughts about what should be in the regulations, which are in the statement of intent. If the Bill receives Royal Assent, we shall circulate all interested organisations with a series of proposals as to how we intend to proceed together with as much of the regulations as possible, with a view to consultation. I recognise the concern of the House. After all, this is an enabling Bill. I take the point that a crucial part of what we eventually intend to achieve will rest with the regulations. That is why I have said—I repeat it—that we shall listen carefully this afternoon to the views of hon. Members as to how they wish to be consulted in the drawing up of the regulations.

We are moving from a non-statutory scheme on the safety of pesticides to a statutory scheme controlling how pesticides are supplied, advertised, stored and used, and to introduce criteria of efficacy and humaneness at the same time—indeed, for the first time. We must be sure that we preserve the best of the present scheme but we must also, in society's interest, take real advantage of the decision to legislate so that the new arrangements are sure, enforceable and open and offer greater environmental protection. At the same time, instead of the restrictive agreements on which we had to depend in the past, we shall have a clearer basis for trade.

There is little that I need add on the remaining clauses and schedules. Clause 20 provides a general defence of due diligence for the offences in the Bill and will protect those who have taken steps to avoid the commission of an offence. Apart from schedule 2, which relates to all three parts of the Bill, the schedules set out detailed provisions on matters that I have already mentioned. We have prepared the usual notes on clauses, which I shall circulate to members of the Committee as soon as they are appointed and we know who they are. I should warn them that the notes on clauses are fairly voluminous.

I hope that I have covered all the main points of the Bill.

Mr. John Carlisle: One point that is not covered in the Bill is the provision of seed corn and the chemical treating of seed corn. Will my hon. Friend say a word about why that was not specifically included in the Bill, or does he understand that it is included?

Mr. MacGregor: That is not the point on which I wanted to finish my peroration. I am not absolutely sure what the answer is. However, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will make sure that that point is dealt with when she winds up.

I repeat that the Government believe in setting high standards of environmental protection. That is what the Bill is aimed at. I commend it to the House.

5.7 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): As the Minister has said, the Bill deals with the effects of development that threatens not only the three areas of our habitat but the creators of that development. That which is intended to liberate us can also endanger, as we have recently discovered, not only immediately but often many years afterwards.

I think that this is the answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). Many hon. Members in all parties in the House have realised that there is no such thing as an unqualified benefit in this area. The Bill is a response to the growing awareness of that fact. There are penalties for all sorts of chemical developments which aid us in other areas.

As it stands, the Bill improves the present unsatisfactory legal position in those three areas. Because it does, we shall not attempt in any way to deny the Bill a Second Reading. This subject crosses party lines. The duty of legislative safeguard is not laid upon the Government alone; it lies fairly and squarely on the whole House of Commons. Our object must be to provide not simply a better legislative framework than that which we now have, but the best possible framework within the limit of our current knowledge. Judged by that standard, the Bill is not entirely satisfactory to us.

As the Government admit, this is an enabling measure. In many cases, as the Minister said to his hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), it enables them to

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make regulations. But that which gives Ministers the power to do all that is necessary also gives them the discretion not to do so. I do not believe that in this case it can be left to such wide ministerial discretion. I give notice that in Committee we shall try to ensure that it is not left to such wide ministerial discretion.

The passage of this Bill is the last opportunity that the House of Commons will have to express concern not only about the form of the measure but about the contents of the regulations. The Government have promised that wide consultations will take place with the organisations that are affected both during and after the passage of the Bill. However, when the House of Commons next considers these matters, they will be in the form of regulations which we shall have to accept or reject as a whole. That is an entirely unsatisfactory state of affairs. We shall be unable to improve them or to reflect the dissatisfaction that is felt by any organisation which believes that its views have been ignored during the consultation period.

Sir John Farr: There is Report stage.

Mr. John: No. With respect, the hon. Gentleman is not following the argument as closely as he normally does. We are referring to regulations which will not be available to the House throughout the passage of the Bill. If by his interjection the hon. Gentleman means that although the regulations are not available to us now they ought to be available at a later stage of the Bill, I should say that I intend to deal with that point and I very much agree with him. However, my point is that the draft regulations will not be available to the House on Report. The regulations will be available only when they are laid, prior to their coming into force. At that stage we shall be able only to accept or reject them. We cannot amend them. I do not claim that this House has a monopoly of wisdom on the subject, but I believe that a large number of hon. Members who are interested in the subject could subject the draft regulations to fairly searching scrutiny which would result in the regulations being as near as possible to the ideal that we all want — namely, the best possible form of legislation to cover this subject.

I return to the point made by the hon. Member for Harborough, that we are entitled to ask the Government to present the regulations to the House in draft form by the time we reach part III of the Bill in Committee or, at the very latest, on Report, if the undertaking given by the noble Lord Belstead, that these regulations will be in operation by the end of the year, is not to be hopelessly wrong.

I come back to the point that I made in my intervention: that the Government must have made good progress with their drafting of the regulations. Those who have held ministerial office know perfectly well that the regulations could not be in operation by the end of the year unless the draftsmen have already started to tackle them. Indeed, a calendar month has passed since the Bill completed its passage in the other place. If further progress has not been made since the passage of the Bill through the other place and now, one is entitled to ask what this month has been all about. I believe that this matter could have been debated earlier. Unless there is to be a long period between the coming into force of the Act and the regulations, without which the Act is ineffective, those regulations must be hurried on.

Mr. Skeet: Has the hon. Gentleman considered th although we may have to wait for a considerable peri before the regulations appear in draft form, since this is enabling Bill, which involves many regulations, th could be included as schedules to the Bill? If they w included as schedules to the Bill, they could be examin by Parliament.

Mr. John: I should be prepared to accept the laying the regulations piecemeal. The House should consider much as possible, bearing in mind the time constrai which are placed upon the parliamentary draftsmen. I am saying is that we deserve something more than we likely to get, given the present rate of progress. Accordi to the timetable, it is possible that there will be a very lo gap between the Bill becoming an Act and the regulatio being laid. If the regulations have not yet been drafted a we have to wait until the Bill becomes an Act before th can be drafted and sent out for consultation, I believe t the Minister's statement that the regulations will be force by the end of the year is so optimistic as to be tota valueless. I regret that I have to put it so harsh Nevertheless, I believe that it has to be said because Minister's assumption is unrealistic.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I ask my hon. Frie whether the Minister is in danger of misreading the sp of the House? If the Bill contained political overtones, might understand his position and he could argue his ca However, the Bill contains no political overtones. Ev hon. Member seeks to improve legislation that gove pesticides. If it is the will of the House that the dr regulations should be put before it, surely it is in interests of the wider public to ensure that they are ma available and that the Minister responds.

Mr. John: On those rare occasions when there is party agreement, I believe that the maximum amount information should be provided. The Minister provided the House with an amended and upda declaration of intent. However, it is no more detail accurate and useful than the declaration of intent given the noble Lord Belstead. All that will really satisfy me the production of draft regulations. However, even if Minister is unable to provide draft regulations, why d he not imitate the actions of Ministers in the Departm of Health and Social Security who, when they have provide regulations following an Act, make kno precisely, although in general terms, the topics that w be covered by the regulations. That would enable both House and those bodies which have to be consulted to f out whether there are any notable omissions and consider the regulations in the most useful way. I rep that this House will not tolerate having to wait a long ti for the regulations while consultations amble along nobody can contribute to the discussions.

I shall now deal with the three parts of the Bill in order in which the Minister dealt with them. Althou pesticides have captured most of the interest, all three pa of the Bill are of the greatest importance if we are safeguard our environment and welfare.

As the Minister pointed out, part I of the Bill deals w the consequences of a man-made disaster upon our fo Clearest in our minds is the ghastly tragedy at Bhopa well remember the great effect that the Flixborou disaster had upon this House. Both of those disasters emergencies of the kind about which the Minister

spoken. Therefore, the principle greatly commends itself and commands the support of the House. I am only sorry that it has been soured by the astonishing failure of the Government to consult local authorities in advance. No adequate information has been provided.

The Minister said that the local authorities which he failed to consult in advance have very wide powers over matters of this kind. There must, therefore, be a clearer definition of what is meant by a major emergency. The Minister referred to a serious national emergency, but nowhere in the Bill is the emergency of which he spoke defined. That emergency must be defined for two reasons. First, we must avoid both the Government and local authorities each seeking to tackle exactly the same emergency, thus creating an overlap. Secondly, we must avoid a possibly fatal hesitation because the Government think that the local authorities are tackling it, or because local authorities think that the Government are tackling it. An easy way to dispel that suspicion would be to clarify the definition and to record local authority responsibilities on the face of the Bill, which is what local authorities of all political persuasions want.

I turn to the point made by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). I shall not take the same example, because I do not think that it was as apposite as the two illustrations that I shall give. What will happen when the "polluter must pay" principle is inadequate? There are two ways in which it could break down. The first is where an emergency is declared, no pollution arises and yet a perishable crop, such as soft fruit, is ruined. I understand that the noble Lord Belstead said that his view was that if the Government made a gross mistake a legal action could be taken against them by the food producer. I am dubious about that. I do not understand the distinction that is being drawn in the other place between a gross and an ordinary mistake. If the declaration of the emergency is mistaken, it leads to compensation or it does not.

The second way is where the polluter cannot be identified. That is not as fanciful as it appears, because in many cases water authorities, in Wales and elsewhere, have the greatest difficulty in tracking down those who cause the chemical pollution of waterways. Prosecutions are often inhibited because of the authorities' failure to identify the polluter. In such cases, the Government must make it clear whether the affected producer is to bear the loss or whether there will be some form of compensation scheme if there is no other adequate cover.

On dumping at sea, I agree with the Minister that, despite some alarmist comment, what is in the Bill for the most part greatly strengthens the existing Act. It is difficult to determine whether the deposit is permament or temporary and whether it is in territorial waters. One of the criteria placed upon the licensing authority is that it must consider the protection of human health. That is a wise and a sensible precaution. It is one of a number of improvements contained in the Bill.

Curiously, the Bill repeals section 6 of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. The Bill was introduced twice in 1974 with the support of both parties that formed Governments in that year. During that time my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and the noble Lord Stodart of Leaston regarded that section, which provides power to check a dumping vessel from another convention state with the consent of that country outside our territorial waters, as an important safeguard.

The Government's answer is that the provision had not been used for the 10 years of its existence. I find that unconvincing, because the section may have been a deterrent. It would be unfortunate if, even with the consent of the other signatory state, we could not deal with a foreign vessel which is dumping just outside our territorial waters. We want the Government to tell us why that back-up power is no longer necessary. Otherwise, I give the Minister notice that the Opposition will seek to restore it in Committee.

The dumping of radioactive waste is a worrying problem. The trade unions, in particular the National Union of Seamen, have helped to focus public anxiety on that subject. That led to the Holliday report. We require an assurance from the Government that the report's recommendations will be implemented in full and that ideas currently being discussed for storing such waste under the seabed will be covered by the Bill which relates to dumping on the seabed.

I hope that the Government will reconsider the preliminary view of the Secretary of State for the Environment that the committee which will review disposal and storage options should be internal. The matter is so sensitive that the public will be reassured only by participation, and that dictates an independent inquiry.

Britain needs to review its policy on dumping at sea. Of the Oslo convention countries, we are responsible for 98·8 per cent. of the sewage sludge dumped at sea. Despite suggestions for the constructive use of that waste, we appear to have no strategy for the future. We are the second worst country for the dumping of industrial waste. Whereas the worst country, France, dumps from one industry, Britain dumps from a wide range of industries. Most other western European countries now plan to phase out marine dumping. If the United Kingdom continues, it is threatened with isolation by the end of the decade. We cannot risk that, and I hope that the Government will actively pursue a change of policy.

Part III of the Bill relates to pesticides. It has evoked great interest, but those of us who remember the pre-pesticide era of food production will know that pesticides have benefited food production not just in this country but in Third world countries.

We cannot consider banning pesticides or indulge ourselves in a yearning for a supposed organic golden age. It never existed. We are, however, dealing with poisons. The exact amount of damage may be a matter for conjecture, but there is evidence that they cause the deaths of birds, butterflies and bees, damage to crops, and affect health. We do not yet know whether they cause insidious damage to human health.

With the known risks from those poisons, the Opposition reiterate that the heedless, indiscriminate use of pesticides, as in the past, must cease. In a nutshell, the Opposition believe that the use of pesticides must be the minimum necessary to make them effective, coupled with the maximum possible accuracy in their application.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the need to be accurate when spraying. It is therefore necessary to have the most up-to-date and precise machine for spraying herbicides. I do not know whether he agrees that it would be helpful if the Advisory Committee on Pesticides could also advise on the new techniques which are coming forward to ensure that they are accurate.

Mr. John: The hon. Gentleman may have hoped that I was passing from the subject, but I assure him that that was one of the topics with which I was going to deal. I was going to tell the Minister what I believe the regulations should contain under three headings. First, they should deal with who should apply the pesticides; secondly, how they should be applied—that is the point raised by the hon. Gentleman—and, thirdly, which pesticides should be applied.

There is some merit in repeating the American distinction between what they call general pesticides and restricted pesticides. General pesticides are the less toxic, such as the ones that we use in the garden. If the correct strength is used, they can be applied without any formal training or supervision, but there are strong arguments for saying that those who apply more toxic pesticides should be trained. The most clear case is for training of those who contract to spray for others. The danger is that such firms will affect neighbouring properties and people nearby.

Even more important is the need for control of those involved in domestic and industrial pest control. Amazingly, that did not even raise a mention in the debate in the other place. Such spraying and treatment involves sensitive aspects, such as hospitals, and often occurs in confined spaces. The capacity to cause harm unintentionally is great. Although we have been fortunate to date, because no great harm has been done, there could be major incidents.

There is every reason to believe that trade associations would welcome compulsory registration of those who contract to spray for others. The trade associations believe that there is no place for cowboy operators when poisons are used. Perhaps BASIS, which is a scheme for pesticide suppliers, and its domestic industrial equivalent should have statutory force to ensure that those who contract to spray for others are qualified and registered. The yellow pages of any telephone directory show dozens of firms which say that they are qualified in pest control and which offer to contract to spray but one does not have the slightest idea whether their operators have any qualifications or training. That intolerable position must be changed.

Applications by farmers and their employees are of more practical difficulty although they are equally important from a health and safety point of view. Even though the number of farmers who apply pesticides to their farms is comparatively small and the occasions on which they use the pesticides comparatively infrequent, farmers need to be aware of the dangers. Farmers now admit the temporary ailments they suffered from the organochlorines and organophosporous pesticides. With the use of new insecticides and pesticides, the risk to those farmers should not be allowed to continue. Perhaps the agricultural training board could undertake training and certification of those using the pesticides.

I urge the Government not to hive off the licensing function. I hope, because of the answer I received on 4 December 1984 from the Parliamentary Secretary, that the Government will be open to considering whether to use the trade associations to undertake licensing. We are talking about the protection of human health and the natural environment. The Government cannot and should not even try to avoid their responsibilities for those aspects.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The hon. Gentleman is not quite correct. He might even be unintentionally misleading the House. The Bill is about the protection of human health; it is not about the protection of the environment on the land. The Bill does apply to the sea. Nothing in the whole of part III applies to the protection of bees, birds or butterflies—three species to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I hope that in Committee the hon. Gentleman will consider tabling amendments to cover this type of environmental protection. The Bill's title includes "Environment Protection".

Mr. John: Far be it from me to eschew an opportunity. In part III, clause 15(1) states:

"The provisions of this Part of this Act shall have effect with a view to protecting the health of human beings, creatures and plants, safeguarding the environment and securing the safe, efficient and humane use of pesticides."

Mr. Crouch: Not enough.

Mr. John: I accept that it is not enough. That is why I am saying what I believe should be in the regulations. The hon. Gentleman must not set me up as an Aunt Sally to knock down and then courteously pick up the point again. People are bruised in that process, and I do not intend that to happen in a subject for which, for once, I bear no responsibility.

Overwhelmingly, spraying in the United Kingdom is done from the ground. Often too much pesticide is applied and sometimes it is applied inaccurately. Damage can be caused by spray drift or vaporisation. Far too many of the appliances used are old and badly maintained and, because of their design, inaccurate. A continuing search for more accurate, and therefore more economical, means of application of pesticides is necessary. Concern has been expressed about the fact that that search might be inhibited by the passage of the Bill. I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary will reassure us that the regulations will not hold back the technology that will promote a more accurate application of pesticides. I believe that the Government should do everything possible to ensure the continuance of such technology, and that means the testing of equipment.

A small proportion of spraying—I believe about 2 per cent.—is done from the air. Although the proportion is small, that is the most visible and most accurate form of spraying. It has led to highly publicised incidents, about which Ministers have more reason to know than the rest of us. There is obviously a need to spray upland bracken from the air, but many of us are unconvinced about the need for the present volume of spraying from the air at low levels. Of all the subjects raised in this debate, I believe that this will be the most closely examined, because the divided responsibility between the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does not encourage reporting of incidents or the easy enforcement of the regulations.

Domestically, the United Kingdom has had a good record under the pesticides safety precautions scheme, but imports have caused the voluntary scheme to break down. We are anxious for safety and efficacy to bear equal weight in this testing. There are difficulties in enforcement. The Health and Safety Executive is charged with a major enforcement role, yet it is being given only 18 additional staff. We all know of the manpower difficulties faced by the HSE. The allocation of 18 more people will not make for efficient enforcement, and that is a great pity.

Although assessment cannot supplant enforcement, assessment at an earlier stage — by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides — has assumed greater

importance. Suggestions have been made to broaden the committee. Some quarters have suggested that its functions should be transferred to the HSE. I would favour giving the Advisory Committee on Pesticides wider scope. The committee should include representatives of the trade unions whose members work with pesticides and should represent consumer interests and environmental organisations. The committee's independence should be underlined by giving it an independent secretariat. At present the committee relies on MAFF for is staff requirements.

The Government should show more imagination towards the committee by charging it with following up the ecological consequences of the use of pesticides. The committee could be involved in promoting new techniques and investigating a subject which I believe we should all take seriously—reduced dependence on pesticides. We are in a high input, high output agricultural economy. The high input side needs to be revised drastically, thereby securing control of what is applied.

That is not enough. We must know what substances are being used for spraying. The Government are making sympathetic noises about information. The question is: how far will they go in making the information available to the public? We believe in the maximum possible disclosure of the toxic effects of pesticides. Of course, there are commercial considerations, but that is true in the United States of America where competition is just as fierce and where development costs are at least as great. Yet there is available publicly in the United States information which is denied to the United Kingdom public about the toxic effects of pesticides. In the United States no one seems to think that the availability of the information undermines commercial confidentiality. We want the new regime to go well. We accept it and want it to be accepted by the public. For that very reason, we need to legislate for the maximum disclosure of information.

Let me underline the concern of many people regarding the export of pesticides. Pressure for greater production in the Third world often obscures the dangers of the substances. We cannot beat that by a unilateral veto, but the hazards of pesticides should be made known to the Governments concerned. Powers to ban the export of pesticides exist already, but there is a feeling abroad that the Government are resisting the principle of prior informed consent, thus seeming to put us against the Food and Agricultural Organisation in this regard. Third world countries do not have as much to fear from us as they do from many other countries. That is why support for the principle of prior informed consent would set an important example which the rest of the world could adopt with profit. We should give a lead in this sector.

As the Minister said, to adapt slightly a Chinese proverb, we will be living with interesting committees. This will be one of them. Many important issues will be debated. I have had time only to outline them. It is our very agreement with the principle which makes us determined that, when the measure becomes an Act, it will be one of which all hon. Members can be proud.

5.42 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Many will support the Bill. Part I, which gives Ministers widespread powers to make emergency provisions to prevent the public eating food that may have been contaminated following a major disaster, will be particularly welcomed, as will the provisions regarding dumping at sea.

I want to address my remarks particularly to part III. There has been talk about the need for balance in the debate. In a sense I think I can provide that balance because I have in my constituency the headquarters of the World Wildlife Fund, as well as part of ICI's plant protection division which deals in agrochemicals.

Many people have been worried about the increasing use of pesticides. In 1972 the World Health Organisation estimated that over 500,000 people were poisoned by pesticides each year with 5,000 fatalities. In justice, it must be said that Britain is not represented proportionately in these figures. In 1982, for example, out of 4,000 non-fatal accidents on farms only 28 involved pesticides. Clearly, the incorrect use of pesticides can endanger crops, harm wildlife and contaminate food. Organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund have brought to public attention examples, such as the increasing residue of poison at Clear lake in California where the over-zealous use of DDD to deal with the gnat population almost eliminated the population of Western Grebe, a local diving bird.

Pesticides inevitably involve risks to users, bystanders, consumers, livestock and domestic animals, as well as to the rest of the environment. It is important to give a balanced view of the role played by pesticides. Between 1955 and 1965 it was estimated that 15 million people throughout the world were saved from dying from malaria by the use of DDT. It also prevented the spread of typhus epidemics following world war 2 by providing a cheap, effective mechanism for controlling lice. Above all, pesticides have meant that people can enjoy good quality food at low prices.

I welcome the remarks of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) about the part played by pesticides in the Third world. We know that 30 to 50 per cent. of the crops are lost through natural causes. A further 30 per cent. would be lost without the use of pesticides.

In addition, the part played by the agrochemical industry in the United Kingdom needs to be emphasised. I have already said that within my constituency I have part of the plant protection division of ICI. In 1983 a total of 7,300 people were employed in the agrochemical industry, 2,000 being involved in research and development. This is very much a technological area. Over half the production goes in exports, which were valued in 1983 at £361 million. There has been considerable expansion in recent years in ICI alone, the turnover having risen from £10 million in 1966 to £650 million in 1984.

I am confident that there will be a widespread welcome for the proposals that no pesticide should be sold or used in the United Kingdom unless it has been exhaustively tested and found to be safe for its recommended use. Non-statutory arrangements depending on good will and voluntary co-operation have worked well for the most part. The pesticides safety precautions scheme, a voluntary scheme set up in 1977 and now estimated to cover 90 per cent. of the products in use, has given the country an excellent record in the safe use of pesticides for 27 years. There have been no fatalities on our farms arising from the recommended use of pesticides. There has been a declining level of residues in foodstuffs. Recently credit was given by the Consumers Association in its report on the subject. There has been a reduction in wildlife

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

incidents involving pesticides. Demands for safe and effective crop protection have increased. It is right that the Bill extends beyond manufacture to the safe use of pesticides and will provide a statutory requirement for product efficacy.

There are areas of concern to which I should like to draw attention. In regard to the ownership of safety data, it is expensive to meet the safety requirements on new products. This has been estimated at about £7·5 million. Considerable resources and expertise are involved. I appreciate the public's need for reassurance, and their desire for information to inspire confidence, but it is important to provide a balance between the provision of information for the benefit of the public and the provision of information that can benefit commercial rivals. We must take account of the commercial interests of manufacturers.

With regard to exports, 90 per cent. of sales from the United Kingdom go in exports which are valued, as I said before, at £361 million. I hope we shall not fall into the trap of dictating to Third world nations about which products they should and should not buy. That is patronising and inappropriate. It is not for us to calculate the risk-benefit analysis as it may appear in other parts of the world.

Mr. Hardy: I am following the logic of the hon. Lady's approach. I agree that we should not be patronising to the Third world, but would she not agree that if we are to sell to the Third world a product that we ban here, or whose use we limit severely, it would be at least honourable for us to tell the Third world that it is a dangerous product?

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, but it is important to say that there is a difference between products that are banned here and products that are not cleared here. Some products that are produced in Britain do not need clearance here if, for example, they are designed for use on rice, tea or coffee crops. That important distinction is not always immediately apparent. I certainly believe that all the relevant information should be available, and that the fact that a product is banned should be made known. However, our efforts should go more towards training Third world countries about the importance of clear labelling and about the ways in which pesticides are used. It would be ridiculous if the outcome of the Bill was that we were extremely restrictive and bureaucratic with regard to exports but permissive with regard to imports.

I join the hon. Member for Pontypridd in asking whether it would be possible to consider extending powers to enable my right hon. Friend to support the British agrochemical supply scheme. It was set up in 1978 by the manufacturers to set standards for distributors and for the storage of pesticides, and has brought about a great improvement in this area.

I welcome the Bill. I hope that it will provide improvements and inspire confidence in the public that the Government are establishing a balance between the needs of the environment and the needs of the population, not only to maintain health but to provide reliable, long-term sources of good quality food.

5.51 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) can be few issues on which public anger surface political positions on the Floor of the House do n us. The Bill gives the House an opportunity to pesticides objectively and to draw on the substanti anxiety that exists on this matter. I shall direct my to part III of the Bill, which is the most importan has certainly elicited most response outside the although I am sure that those who are fortunate e serve on the Committee will deal in great depth aspects of the Bill.

During the past few days I have approached m Members, including Conservative Members, to privately with them their views on the Bill a general attitudes to pesticides control. There is consensus on the matter. If anything, the Mini slightly out of step today when he refused to forthcoming about the draft regulations that a considered by the Ministry. If he published th regulations, even in the elementary form that t today, the House would be grateful and the C would be indebted to him, because that would pr a far more reasonable and rational debate, whic the country expects of the House of Commons.

In 1979, the Royal Commission on Envir Pollution summed up its attitude to pesticides by

"Pesticides are by design biologically active a hazardous chemicals however stringent the tests applie There is the possibility of unforeseen and unforeseeab They should be used with care in the minimum quantiti for effective pest control and increasing usage s questioned."

That cautionary statement encapsulates man reservations that have grown about the current pesticide use and its control. There is a dee suspicion in the minds of the public that pestici a greater hazard than is generally admitted, a farmers are beginning to question some of the u assumptions that have governed pesticide use war. That fear is by no means irrational. It is now that a significant proportion of chemical spray e the food that we eat—a fact that was brought attention by the discovery of large residues in a supermarket food last year. Pesticide residues food through crop overdosing and spray d neighbouring fields and because some farme pesticide shortly before harvesting, although usually supposed to be a gap of several weeks spraying and eating the crops.

Three sets of problems confront us in this problems for the people, problems for the fa problems for the Third world. To take problem people first, there is strong evidence that ma people suffer ill health from pesticides than offici suggest. A survey of 80 farmers discovered that half had been poisoned at some time or another only one had bothered to report it. That is com variance with the statement by the Minister, wh to write off any damage to health when he re isolated cases.

Recent reports from Friends of the Earth an Association show that many pesticide incidents reported. Pesticides can produce immediate s such as nausea and headaches, but many are also of causing cancer, and there is a growing beli

researchers that they also cause allergies. Although most pesticides used in Britain have been passed by the pesticides safety precautions scheme, some have been banned in other countries; the popular paraquat has been banned in Germany. I have to say that insufficient monitoring and a generally laissez-faire attitude to agrochemicals have allowed health problems to build up for decades without being effectively challenged. Indeed, it is hard to measure to what extent that has happened during the years.

There are also substantial problems for farmers. It would be misleading to criticise pesticides solely on environmental or health grounds. Farmers have pragmatic reasons for being unhappy about the current levels of use. The prospects of substantial cuts in farming subsidies, along with current quota problems, mean that farmers have an urgent priority to reduce waste. One way to do that would be to pursue a major rationalisation of pesticide policy.

During the past few decades, pesticide research has been strangely lopsided. Chemical formulations have become progressively more complex, while their delivery methods have changed little since the 19th century. Using conventional hydraulic nozzles, less than 1 per cent. of the sophisticated and expensive pesticide reaches the pest at all. It might be true that more efficient delivery methods are being developed and, in some places, used today, but until now they have received little encouragement from the wider farming community, and indeed some positive discouragement from some sectors interested in continuing high pesticide sales. I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) drew attention to that point in his speech, and we must follow it up in detail in Committee.

There is also a growing problem of pesticide resistance. Heavy reliance on insurance spraying means that pests are evolving resistance to some chemicals more quickly, thus seriously shortening the useful lives of the chemicals. Several pesticide firms already have problems financing new products as a result of pests quickly developing resistance because of pesticide over-use, and reports suggest that some are likely to go out of business as a direct result.

Far from being more efficient, farmers continue to use grossly wasteful methods of applying spray and are becoming progressively hooked into using more and more chemicals, to rapidly diminishing advantage. Many farmers are well aware of the contradictions inherent in relying on chemical companies, which sell pesticides, for advice on how to use them. They can see no alternative. They look to Parliament for an initiative, and the Bill, if wisely considered and amended in Committee, offers that opportunity.

At present, Britain, along with our European partners and the United States, is benefiting from pesticide exports to the Third world. This puts us under a strong moral obligation to ensure that these pesticides really are useful to the countries involved, an obligation which is all too frequently being sidestepped.

It is a matter of international disgrace that many pesticides which are banned or restricted in Western countries on health grounds are still exported to countries with less stringent safety regulations. It was estimated recently that 25 per cent. of all United States pesticide exports involved formulations banned for use in the United States. Oxfam believes that there are about 375,000 cases of pesticide poisoning each year, including 10,000 de
That is a very different picture from the presentation
by the Minister. I hope that the Minister who replie
qualify that earlier presentation, especially as the fi
that I have given are believed to be on the conser
side.

There is another problem with thoughtless pes
exporting. Many seed firms are now owned by che
companies which develop seeds and pesticides
integrated fashion, breeding crops for high yield
than pest resistance. This can be disastrous in a co
where land and capital are particularly unevenly div

Rich farmers get higher yields from the new strain
the poorer growers cannot afford them and lose out
relative prices of crops fall. These farms are then gra
bought out by richer farmers, who often convert to
crops, making the inequalities even more acute and
as a destabilising influence, often on the whole reg

These and other problems are coming to a head at
when a growing number of farmers are turning their
on chemical-based farming and are turning
expanding wholefood and basic food market. The B
brought many green groups into the pesticide debs
the first time. The wide range of organisations which
been involved in lobbying, including the Royal Soci
the Protection of Birds, Friends of the Earth, th
Association, the National Society for Clean Air, the
Society for Nature Conservation, the Joint Committ
the Conservation of British Insects, the Flora and
Preservation Fund and Oxfam, shows the urgency
which the legislation is regarded.

Recently I chaired a meeting in the House of m
the major organisations concerned with the pes
issue. At that and subsequent meetings, nearly
organisations—with the exception of those with
commercial interest, such as the NFU and the
Agrochemicals Association, which, I must confess
fair, were not invited to participate in our final discu
—came to a broad agreement about the main ch
for which to lobby at this stage.

The targets were not chosen easily, and many
resisted such a general approach, having indi
priorities, which will continue to be followed
Committee, after the Bill becomes law and wh
discuss the regulations. Despite this, a seri
recommendations were put forward which, whi
meeting all the objectives, provide a broad conser
the most important points at this stage in the pes
debate.

The first is aerial spraying, which provokes by
most pesticide-related public complaints, although
spraying accounts for only 2 per cent. of British sp
Virtually all the industrial groups admit private
stricter controls are needed, but often they cann
exactly what they have in mind when aske
suggestions.

Such regulations as exist are often ignored in pr
and aerial spraying would be uneconomic in many
if all the regulations about not spraying near hous
roads were taken really into account. Many group
called for an outright ban, and there is support for
the farming community and even among hon. Mem
both sides of the House.

However, there has also been a strong lobby in
of continued aerial application for forestry and b
control, and for this reason the consensus among th

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

groups is that there should at least be a ban on aerial spraying of arable crops where viable alternatives exist. That would avoid hazardous aerial spraying in well-populated areas.

The problems of inefficient and poorly maintained equipment could be solved to a large extent by the adoption of a series of British standards for spray equipment. Starting with general points about upkeep and safety, standards could in time be adopted for other factors, to include droplet size, amount of drift and chemical wastage. That would provide considerable insurance for the public against dangerous spray practices and would give farmers more confidence about the efficiency of machinery before they actually bought it.

At present, people wanting information about pesticide testing can often obtain it via the freedom of information regulations in the United States, while it remains secret in the United Kingdom. This situation gives the lie to claims that a more open system of pesticide regulation would necessarily give competitors an unfair advantage—the argument often used by the industry—whereas it really shows the need for similar statutes in Britain. These could be introduced along with safeguards to protect manufacturers. For example, all safety testing could be subject to examination to ensure that it was actually carried out by the firm seeking the licence, thus dispelling fears that safety data would be stolen.

The fourth area in which the green lobby is united concerns export controls and the principle of prior informed consent. Under that principle, the exporting country would have to provide full details of pesticide hazards to the importing country. Export would not take place unless the importing country gave its positive consent to the importation principle of prior informed consent.

The principle is incorporated in the draft of a code on the use and distribution of pesticides at present under consideration by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the code has the backing of many countries. The Government should support the code, and the principle of prior informed consent should be introduced in this legislation as a first step towards the control of pesticide exports to the Third world.

Many other issues are of great concern to the green lobby. A strong case has been made for the compulsory training and licensing of spray operators, as in some other countries. This would minimise the harmful effects of pesticides and maximise the efficiency possible with new spraying technology. Many accidents occur because of ignorance rather than malice, and proper training could help enormously. The process of education could be helped by insisting that advertisements carry information about health effects and the pest resistance of the products they describe.

It has been suggested that a 10 m buffer zone at field edges would help reduce losses of wildlife from spray drift. I urge the Government to examine that proposal carefully. Likewise, I draw attention to the need for proper records to be kept by all sprayers, so easing the process of proving from where damage has come when spray drift occurs.

It is vital for us to debate pesticides. Deep conc felt throughout the United Kingdom about the mat hope that, in considering the Bill, Parliament measur to the importance of the issue.

6.10 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I listened car to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Camp Savours), who spoke with passion and emotion, whic subject properly deserves. As the House knows, I ha interest in the chemical industry but I do not think tha involves the manufacture of pesticides. That doe mean that I am against the manufacture of such proc Both sides of the House, including both Front Ben have expressed the belief that pesticides make a val contribution to human welfare. The Bill is concern ensure that we control most carefully the use of pesti so that human welfare is not jeopardised in any wa

Reference has been made to the British Agroche Association, which I believe has described the aim o Bill as well as any other body. It speaks of the u pesticides and how they should properly be used

"without harm to the applicator or bystanders, to the con of treated products, or to the environment at large."

With that I would agree. Those are worthy aims o important measure.

I welcome the Bill because it gives strength t existing voluntary system that is known as the pesti safety precautions scheme, which has been a volu system for the past 27 years and has given us a me of protection. It has been a better form of prote against the use of pesticides for the consumer of food the systems which have been introduced in other coun

The National Farmers Union has spoken abou importance of the

"safe and efficient use of pesticides".

We welcome its controlled attitude towards important but hazardous products. The NFU speaks

"reducing pesticide usage to the minimum consistent efficient food production".

I would say amen to that, but what exactly does that p mean? I think that it needs some explanation. W farmer considers to be efficient food production i need some qualification by those concerned wit consumer or the environment. That is what we considering, and that is what we shall go on to con in Committee. It is our intention to achieve the balance. I do not think that the NFU would disagree the contention that there is a need for balance.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): My Friend is right to talk of the need for balance, but o the reasons why the farming organisations take the that he has quoted is that sprays are so expensive farmers restrict their use to the minimum. Th important for their profits and to ensure that sprays a wasted by being allowed to pollute elsewhere.

Mr. Crouch: That is a good argument and I co that point to my hon. Friend. However, I do not thin I have lost my argument. We must hope that farmer not be in such a state of affluence that they be wasteful of these expensive products. It seems that will no longer be in that state in the arable sector.

I go along with the argument that there is a need to the public informed about the hazards of pesticid believe that the public have a right to know what is

done to farm products — to the food that they will ultimately consume — by the application of pesticides. What about harmful residues? Who decides what is a harmful residue? According to the Bill, and bearing in mind the regulations that will flow from it, it seems that the decision will be made by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his advisers. However, we must know about the harmful levels of pesticides that may build up in harvested crops. We should consider full disclosure, notwithstanding manufacturers' commercial interests.

Full disclosure is required in the United States. Some years ago, under President Carter's Administration, the United States went through a traumatic period of environmental legislation. Perhaps that Administration overdid it a bit. It established the Environment Protection Agency, whose powers transcend any that we give to our agencies. The United States said that the public were entitled to know and that full disclosure must be made about these possible hazards. It is an environmental nation but it is also an extremely commercial nation.

The United States devised a system that safeguarded manufacturers' commercial interests while allowing the public to know exactly what might be at stake or what hazards might be present. A system was devised whereby a manufacturer could claim that the data revealed to the public related to his product alone. This would be supported by the responsible Government Department or agency as the case may be. This seemed to satisfy the United States manufacturers. Perhaps the provision of greater information could be considered, while safeguarding manufacturers' commercial interests to a satisfactory level. We must remember always that we must find a satisfactory level of protection for the consumer. In dealing with these important subjects we must put the customer, or consumer, first. The consumer, or customer, is extremely concerned, and rightly so, about health hazards and the environment.

I live in Kent in an area which endures a good deal of aerial spraying, which often takes place on quite small fields. It is used on oilseed rape, barley, wheat and beans. It is extraordinary that small fields of fewer than 20 acres are treated to expensive aerial spraying. There is the problem of spray drift and the possible danger that is posed by spraying aircraft. Parliament has an obligation to impose a duty on the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure that there is no hazard, or a very small hazard, from spraying aircraft. I live in a converted oasthouse and it seems to be much too high in the sky when the spraying aircraft are operating at a height that is below the level of my oasthouse in the course of spraying the nearby fields. There is spray drift all over the place. The spray goes over the roads and the surrounding houses. There is no control——

Sir Peter Mills: That is not fair.

Mr. Crouch: Well, there is some control, but I am talking about the man who is flying the spraying aircraft. He is concerned not to hit trees or oasthouses. What happens to the spray that emerges from the pipes of his aircraft is another matter. I am not saying that aerial spraying should not take place and I do not want to over-emphasise the problems and possible dangers. We are advised that aerial spraying accounts for about 2 per cent. of all agricultural land sprayed. However, there is a hazard that we should bear in mind. It is one that must not be neglected.

Mr. John Carlisle: My hon. Friend says that he does not want to over-emphasise the problems and possible dangers of aerial spraying, but that is precisely what he has done. Perhaps he will tell us what accidents have occurred while civil aircraft have been involved in spraying over the past few years. Secondly, perhaps he will take back some of his remarks about spray control. Aerial operators are stringent in complying with regulations while carrying out their task. My hon. Friend has exaggerated a minor problem.

Mr. Crouch: I shall let my case rest. The House will have listened to my hon. Friend. My car has been sprayed while I have been driving in Kent. This has happened while the sprays have been drawn by tractors in the fields. One is alert to "spraying today" signs and I avoid the lanes when such signs appear. On occasions I have been unable to see through my windscreen because of the spray that has been blown across on to the lanes. Perhaps this has happened because I live in a small out of the way place. My final comment on aerial spraying is horses for courses and planes for plains. It is not suitable to use aircraft for spraying on hills and down valleys. Aerial spraying is much safer when it is carried out over flatter country — perhaps that which is to be found in East Anglia.

I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Pontypridd to comment about the Bill's title. I did not interrupt my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food because he endured so many interruptions. I feel that the Bill is wrongly titled. It is more about the protection of food and the use of pesticides than environmental protection. Not enough mention is made in the Bill about the protection of the environment and our wildlife. My attention has been drawn to the fact that clause 15(1) states that

> "The provisions of this part of this Act shall have effect with a view to protecting the health of human beings, creatures and plants".

That is the only mention in the Bill of creatures and plants, apart from another reference in clause 15(15), in which they are not mentioned with a view to their protection. Subsection (15) tells us that

> "'pesticide' means any substance or preparation prepared or used for any of the following purposes—
>
> *(a)* destroying organisms harmful to plants or to wood or other plant products;
>
> *(b)* destroying undesired plants;
>
> *(c)* destroying harmful creatures".

Subsection (16) tells us that "pesticides" include substances used for

> "*(a)* protecting plants or wood or other plant products from harmful organisms . . .
>
> *(c)* giving protection against harmful creatures;
>
> *(d)* rendering such creatures harmless;
>
> *(e)* controlling organisms with harmful or unwanted effects on water systems, buildings or other structures . . .
>
> *(f)* protecting animals against ectoparasites".

That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about giving a little strength through the Bill to the protection of wildlife, and lending our support to the wildlife lobby. If I were a member of the Standing Committee, I would move three amendments dealing with birds, butterflies and bees.

Mr. Skeet: Why is my hon. Friend not on the Committee?

Mr. Crouch: Tomorrow morning I embark upon another long Committee journey. That will take up much of my time, and, in any case, there must be opportunities for all hon. Members to take part in Committee work. Therefore, I can only make my observations here.

I speak on the wildlife question as seriously as the hon. Member for Workington. Too many birds have disappeared from the British scene. In Kent the bullfinch has been shot to death because it feeds on apple and pear blossom. I can understand the farmer not liking creatures that feed on his crops, but could we not spare the blackbird, the thrush, the fieldfare, the wren and the nightingale? Could we not protect the many inhabitants of our island that make it such a beautiful place? Bees have a vital job to do. Kent, the Garden of England, could not manage without bees. We import them from abroad to fertilise the apple orchards. Butterflies are important too. Those factors are not unimportant. Let us write such species into the Bill. Let us be a little more definite about the protection of wildlife, as though we meant business.

6.24 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): This is a most important debate. It is very unusual for us all to be united in our deliberations. There may have been the odd hiccup now and then during this debate but in general we are all in favour of the Bill. At a time when technology is advancing by leaps and bounds, it is more important than ever that we should have sufficient controls over the use of that technology. That is as true in the world of agriculture as in any other, and it is most encouraging that we have been given this opportunity to discuss such matters.

As a farmer, I am naturally in favour of improving production and making the farmer's work easier. However, that need not be done at the expense of the environment or by endangering people or animals.

I hope that the Minister can clarify one point. According to clause 15(2), Ministers will have power to

"(k) specify how much pesticide or pesticide residue may be left in any crop, food or feeding stuff; and

(l) direct that, if there is more pesticide or pesticide residue in any crop, food or feeding stuff than the proportion specified by virtue of paragraph *(k)* above, either of the Ministers shall have power . . . to seize or dispose of the crop".

As we are now full members of the EEC, I wonder whether the Minister who replies to the debate can tell us what the situation is with regard to commodities imported into this country. That would be most helpful.

I do not entirely agree with all the recommendations of Friends of the Earth—I consider that some of those recommendations are impractical—but we all owe that organisation a debt of gratitude for drawing public attention to the dangers caused by human beings to the earth around them.

Part III deals with pesticides and their use in food production. My noble Friend Lord Mackie moved an amendment to ensure that applications of pesticides should be made only by, or under the supervision of, licensed operators. I understand that that amendment was flatly rejected by the Government, despite the fact that efficient licensing and training schemes are in operation in both the United States and Canada and, furthermore, that the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution recommended such a scheme for the United Kingdom. I wonder why the Government are so opposed to such a scheme. I should be glad of an explanation from the Minister today.

With the Government cuts in the Ag Development and Advisory Service, the users of p could become entirely reliant on chemical salesmen for all their information. The salesmen' is mainly in selling the product, not in warni problems.

The clause covering the monitoring of residu much to be desired. In the outline proposals publ summer, there was a clause covering the way in approved product should be used, the metho where it could be used and the amount and timi That clause has now been lost and the Bi consequence become weaker.

In clause 15(2)*(j)* The Government have m concessions towards freedom of information. Ho my view, there should be further clarificatio conditions

"that the Ministers consider appropriate"

for the provision of such information. I would w statement from the Minister on that point too.

We are also concerned about the promised re which will obviously have a bearing on further d of the Bill. Is the Minister consulting on those re If so, who is being consulted and when will th be completed so that the regulations can come b House? The Minister said that there will be con this year and that the recommendations will be to us before the end of the year.

I believe that the whole House considers consultations should include the National Farme the Scottish National Farmers Union, the Farm of Wales, the Ulster Farmers Union, the Landowners Association and the Young Farm movement, which includes the farmers of tom possible, representatives from such bodies sho the advisory committee. We should also get in t the National Union of Agricultural and Allied W its members apply pesticides. Many other org have been mentioned. I hope that the Governme in touch with all the organisations concerned. If is consulted, we shall get the regulations right.

I endorse the views of Oxfam on the expor substances to the Third world. I should greatly export controls to help safeguard people in less countries who are at risk from pesticides that a in Britain.

The agriculture industry is worried a Government's determination, in spite of all r opposition, to cut scientific research by some £ during the next few years. The cut will obviou research into pesticide use. It is also distressin soil survey for England and Wales is being drastically. I am worried whether there will by a long-term research into the effect of pesticide There should be more research into application t and the effect on people of drift and moni pesticides in the environment. None of tha possible if there is no money for research.

The Agricultural Development and Advisor which is most valuable, is also being pruned. great shame. Who is to carry out all the monit provide advice? Without sufficient research a advice, the Bill could end up being just so m meaning words. Nevertheless, my colleagu welcome the Bill and will not oppose its Second It does not go far enough, but we hope

Government will heed what has been said today. The most important thing is to get it right. The whole House is determined to get the regulations right this time. I hope that the Minister wiill assure us that we shall be able to examine the regulations in draft and in their final form before being asked to accept them in this House so that we can get them right.

6.34 pm

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on bringing it forward. I apologise for not being here during his speech — I was in my Agriculture Committee.

I welcome the initiative taken on the contamination of food. The Government are right to take powers under clauses 1 and 2 but I hope that there will be no tragedies which mean that part I has to be implemented. Farmers and processors feel ever more strongly about quality control. Vast sums of money are now being spent in the food industry to ensure that food is pure and of good quality. We must congratulate the processors on what they are doing.

The National Farmers Union has asked some questions, which I should like to draw to the attention of the House. One concerns compensation when food cannot be sold as a result of a tragedy that requires Government to take their emergency powers under part I. The union writes:

"No-one would criticise the Government for acting cautiously to protect the public, but equally no-one would bear the cost of protecting the public except the unfortunate individuals on whom restrictions are imposed in the circumstances. The NFU believes this is unjust, and that the Government should ensure that innocent third parties are not penalised in the interests of protecting the public. They should be compensated for their losses, which could otherwise ruin their businesses."

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that important matter.

Although there are criticisms about farmers' use of pesticides, I am sure that the House agrees that farmers do not deliberately cause annoyance or other problems. The modern farmer is highly intelligent. He knows the business and the dangers of pesticides and will try to protect people and nature. Moreover, farmers have shown that they will co-operate on these matters.

Contrary to what one might imagine from listening to some people, pesticides are not evil. They are of great benefit to the community and, in a hungry world with an ever-increasing population, they play an important part in ensuring adequate food supplies. Bearing in mind the startling increase in food production overseas where modern pesticides have been introduced, we can only thank scientists and pharmaceutical and chemical firms. There would be a tremendous increase in hunger if pesticides were not used. Of course they must be used carefully, but we should not exaggerate the problems.

We have had voluntary arrangements and they have worked well. It is no use the Government having the proposed compulsory arrangements without providing and paying for inspectors. It is easy to put into the Bill that one needs to do something, but one must also provide the finance to pay for the inspector to check on something that has been done on a voluntary basis in the past. I should like to hear the views of the Minister.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) made an interesting speech, in particular about the problems that he was experiencing in his garden and his motor car. Such problems result from the inefficient of pesticides. The efficient use of pesticides is essenti the farmer. The most costly item in his production is use of pesticides. No farmer will deliberately spraying my hon. Friend's car with his chemicals bec he will not waste it. He will not want to see it go in ditches and pollute the environment because he does want to spray the caterpillars, butterflies or the birds

Mr. Skeet: When a man who is doing aerial spra is about to make his turn, what incentive is there to him from spraying right over the hedgerows and my ho spraying me as well, and then going back on to the again? There is no incentive for him to economise o client's account.

Sir Peter Mills: With respect to my hon. Friend, t is an incentive. He has to be cost conscious, otherwis will not get the contract to go on spraying the farm crops. From my knowledge of it, which is perhaps j little more extensive than that of my hon. Friend, I sh say that aerial sprayers are careful in these matters. are also strictly controlled and a pilot can lose his lic if he does not keep to the rules and regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury menti bees. By law or custom, the beekeepers are notified b spraying, so that the bees can be locked up before spra is carried out. We must take note of what my hon. Fr and others are saying in these matters, but aerial spra is most important. When crops are a certain height, i runs over them with a land sprayer, once can damage considerably. There are times of the year when it is so that one cannot get on to the land, but one can pu fertilisers and sprays by aircraft or helicopters. We to do this in the modern world to produce the food a price that will be paid for it.

Imports are important and in the south-west, w ferry service between Plymouth and Roscoff, farmers it handy to run over to the continent and buy che sprays and chemicals. While there should be strict co over these matters, I do not see why farmers shoul denied the right to fetch their own chemicals and sp from abroad, as long as the products come up t standards that we require. It would be useful if some instructions were written in English, as it would hel farmers in the south-west to facilitate the spraying of crops.

Farmers have played an important role in develo new techniques of pesticide application, using red quantities of pesticide, either through new desig machines or with conventional equipment. This mu right, because the less spray is put on, the better f concerned, not only for the farmer, and his profit, b wildlife or anyone else, even my hon. Friend the Me for Canterbury.

A number of pesticides have been cleared, for exa for use on cereal crops, that are just as effective o pests that attack flowers, fruit and vegetables. We flexibility. The farmers should be allowed to use a that is cleared for cereals and other crops. This may minor point, but I believe that Lord Belstead made it in the other place that the Government were consid this.

I support the Bill. It is right that we have it. We s tread carefully, but it is in the interests of the cons to have pesticides and farmers who care about matters.

6.45 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I shall concentrate on part III of the Bill. I assure the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) that there is a considerable difference of opinion between hon. Members on the contents and objectives of the Bill, and its practicality. I freely confess that I bring a different approach to the debate from that put forward by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West. I have no vested interest to declare or advance. My interest is that of one who represent the individuals in my constituency——

Sir Peter Mills: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point of view, but do we not both have a common interest in that we are consumers and have consumers in our constituencies who are concerned about the food that they eat?

Mr. Davies: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point and I am sure that if he stays for the rest of the debate he will hear the rest of my argument.

There is a body of opinion, which certainly exists in my constituency, that looks at the legislation from a different point of view from that which has been put forward tonight. We can identify several principles that should direct our thinking on the subject. First, when we consider the use of pesticides in the countryside, we must recognise that we expect the countryside to produce our food. However, we also expect it to be a safe place for those who work there and for those who enjoy recreation there. I think that we would all agree on that. But that principle has not been advanced or safeguarded in the Bill.

Secondly, I think that we would all agree that we must have a heritage to leave to our children and our grandchildren, a heritage that is safe and of which we can be proud. The Bill falls short in several regards on that principle.

Thirdly, we should have an informed public. If there is to be a public debate, and if people are to examine the issues raised by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West, who has now left the Chamber, they should do so on the basis of choice. Choices can be made only when people are aware and informed of the details and of the effects of pesticides that are to be used.

Fourthly, there is a principle that has been highlighted most graphically in my constituency as a result of recent international events. We should be aware of the trading relationship between our country and the Third world and of the effects of technology on developing practices in the Third world. Unfortunately, the Bill falls short in this regard as well.

Within that general framework, there are particular points of concern. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West spoke about the plus side of pesticides, and we would all accept his argument that pesticides are useful. We want them to be used and we recognise that they are an important part of the productive use of our land for food. However, a difference of opinion arises when we say that we are opposed to the indiscriminate use of pesticides. Pesticides are all right, but not when they are used in the wrong place, or at the wrong time, or when the wrong pesticides are used or used indiscriminately and allowed to affect not only other crops but our natural environment, animals, pets, workers and a whole range of other people. In those circumstances, pesticides are not acceptable. In that respect, I have considerable reservations about the Bill. We are all aware of the potentially lethal effects of pesticides on the general environment.

I was surprised to learn of the effects of these pesticides, and I was concerned to understand the scale of usage of pesticides in Britain in 1984. Figures I have received from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food indicate that last year 1,000 million gallons of pesticides were sprayed on to our countryside. That is a horrific figure, particularly when one considers the effect of those pesticides not only on the specific pests at which they are directed but on the whole range of the natural environment outwith the specific pests.

Mr. John Carlisle: With regard to the figure quoted by the hon. Gentleman, I think he must mean that the spray was put on with water, and that it was not neat pesticide, as he hinted by his comment. I think that he will find that water was included.

Mr. Davies: The figure of 1,000 million gallons clearly implies that there is an element of dilution. I suggest that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) has a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) and asks him whether he is content to be sprayed by a dilution of pesticide.

I wish to deal next with the effect of the pesticides and insecticides on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food approved list of 1983. Eighty-eight per cent. of those insecticides were dangerous or harmful to fish; 46 per cent. were dangerous or harmful to bees; 43 per cent. were dangerous or harmful to livestock; 42 per cent. were dangerous or harmful to wildlife and game. It may well be that the hon. Member for Luton, North is content to condone a situation in which 1,000 million gallons of pesticides are sprayed on to the countryside, knowing the lethal impact that this can have on the whole of the natural environment.

It may well be that the hon. Gentleman, who shakes his head, says that that does not apply because pesticides are used in controlled conditions, at the appropriate time, on the appropriate crops, in the right conditions and using the right equipment, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that that is not true. All the evidence that has been produced and all the material, which I am sure will have been sent to the hon. Gentleman as it was to me and to other hon. Members, indicates that that is not the case and that a great deal of damage is being done, not necessarily deliberately and wantonly, but carelessly, to the natural environment.

I believe that there is a direct responsibility on Government and on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if they are to codify the practices and the procedures under which these pesticides are to be used, at least to ensure that proper safeguards are built in. In my view, that requirement is not being met.

I recognise the pressures on the farming community. I believe that those pressures stem from the Ministry of Agriculture, from the common agricultural policy and from the consumer, all of whom wish to see more food produced at prices lower than last year's prices. I recognise the work done by the agricultural community in that respect. However, I also recognise the pressure brought on it by the chemical industry, whose representatives go round from farm to farm extolling the virtues of particular pesticides and urging greater and more frequent application of those pesticides.

I refer the Minister to the agriculture and pollution report of the Royal Commission on Environment Protection, 1979:

"We think that there should be a considerably more questioning attitude than is now apparent, especially in the government departments concerned, to the scale of pesticides usage and we believe that this should be exemplified by a declared policy aim to reduce usuage to a minimum consistent with effecient food production. We have been told by some farmers that they feel themselves to be on a 'treadmill' with regard to pesticides usage — compelled by circumstances to depend on chemicals to an extent which they, as countrymen, intuitively find disturbing".

Those are the real economic pressures that I understand and that I am sure all hon. Members understand.

When legislating, we must be aware of the overall impact of Government policy. If there are dangers and discrepancies in the way in which our declared policies are operated, surely we must be prepared to build safeguards into the legislation.

The Minister made a reference to the impact of aerial spraying. I am not sure whether this was the intention of the Minister, but the implication was that aerial spraying was more or less a thing of the past, and that we need not be too concerned about it or about indiscriminate spraying.

I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Transport who, under the rules of this strange place, has responsibility for the distribution of pesticides by air. In his reply, the Secretary of State stated that, whereas in 1981 295,000 hectares were sprayed by air, in 1982—the last year for which figures were available—a total of 360,000 hectares was sprayed by air. That concerns me particularly because I have seen the impact of aerial spraying on Forestry Commission land near my home. I know that the impact of a specific herbicide is not confined to the specific target species, but that almost an entire ecosystem is wiped out. In addition, the Minister informed me that some 5·3 million hectares of crops and grass were treated with pesticides once or more often in 1982. That is the scale of the problem.

The response from the Government earlier today surprised me. They said that they cannot lay draft regulations, and I understand some of the reservations of the Government about laying such draft regulations. In effect, the Government said very much what I was told in reply to a written question on 29 November 1984. I asked the Minister:

"if he will make a statement on the proposals in the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]* to control advertising of pesticides."

The Minister replied:

"The powers afforded by clause 15(1)*(c)* would be sufficiently wide to permit Ministers to control the advertising of pesticides if they considered it necessary." — [*Official Report*, 29 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 589.]

That sums up my criticism of the legislation. This is an enabling Bill and, whatever questions we put to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Ministry of Transport and other Departments, the answer is that the powers are in the Bill. When the Minister has been challenged on the detailed regulations, the reply has been, rather like producing a rabbit out of a hat, that they now have a statement of intent.

I have had a half an hour or so to consider the statement of intent, and I must tell the Minister that it does not satisfy my criticisms; in fact, it raises more questions than it answers. Paragraph 9(c) of the statement of intent states

"that the pesticide be applied within minimum and maximum dilution rates in terms of concentrate per volume".

Frankly, I had hoped that the Minister would be considering new research in terms of technology and methods of applying pesticides. I hoped that, in producing the statement of intent, the Minister would include a provision to the effect that the Government would take all necessary steps to ensure that pesticide use was by the controlled droplet application system. Paragraph 13 of the statement of intent states:

"Regulations would prohibit the aerial spraying of all pesticides".

It qualified that rather blunt statement by saying

"except those specifically approved for application from the air."

What are we to believe? What credibility can the Government have when they say on the one hand that they will ban aerial spraying of all pesticides and on the other hand that they will grant specific approval? Such an approach is not good enough, particularly as the matter will be debated in detail in Committee. Neither the Minister, supporters of the legislation, lukewarm supporters of the legislation nor opponents of the legislation will have the faintest idea of how it will be applied in practice.

I take issue with the Minister on two points to which I hope he will reply. The last sentence of paragraph 16 states:

"Record-Keepers would be required to make these records available to Ministers or their authorised officers when requested."

That refers to the set of regulations on pesticides and their use.

Does the Minister realise that people other than Ministers and their authorised officers are worried about the effect of pesticides? Farmers might be interested in the information. Agriculture workers will be interested and will want to know the effect of the pesticides if they accidentally receive a faceful when the wind changes. Environmental groups will want to know the impact of the pesticides when they are used indiscriminately in the countryside. Many people clamour to know what is happening to our environment. The Minister might say that the information should be kept private and secret and that it should be known only to Ministers. If she does that she will fly in the face of the major environmental development of the last 20 years.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does not the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) realise that the explanatory leaflets provided with all the major agricultural chemicals contain information about what to do in the case of accident and what antidotes should be administered? The hon. Gentleman paints an exaggerated picture.

Mr. Davies: I accept that. I am encouraged that the advice that the hon. Member would give to an agriculture worker who was sprayed accidentally by a pesticide would be to go to the nearest stream and wash it off. Frankly, that is not good enough. That is the palliative suggested to the person who is affected by pesticides. The point at issue is not the necessary remedial action, but the knowledge about a particular pesticide. If the information is available, if the result of research and the impact of a pesticide on humans, animals and plants is known, it should be made available to the public.

The second point on which I take issue with the Minister involves disclosure in the wider sense. Paragraph 17 of the statement of intent states:

"The Regulations would provide for the public disclosure of information obtained by Ministers under the powers described in

[Mr. Davies]

paragraphs 4 and 16 (a) — (c); information which would prejudice the commercial interests of those supplying it would be withheld."

The Government say that they will provide the information, but they say that they will decide what information they wish to withhold. The statement continues:

"The degree of disclosure would be a matter for consultation with all interests involved".

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will have a cosy discussion with representatives of the agriculture chemical industry, the National Farmers Union and others who are directly involved and will neglect to tell any other interested party the information required. Perhaps Government supporters are happy to continue to support legislation which does that, but I believe that if something is good enough for the Americans it is good enough for us. If it is good enough for the Americans to have freedom of information legislation, it is good enough for us. I refer the House to the code of practice in the United States. Last week I received a letter from the Campaign for Freedom of Information which stated:

"The United States Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act requires full disclosure by the environmental protection agency of safety data submitted by manufacturers, but, for a fixed period, allows only the manufacturer who originally produced the data to make use of it in support of pesticide registration applications."

We realise that commercial interests exist. We accept that research is necessary and that there must be reinvestment, profit and the protection of commercial secrets. However, a limit must be drawn on the extent to which commercial secrets are allowed to affect the proper interests of those directly involved in the use of pesticides and their impact on the wider community.

By accident I came upon another quotation today. I came across it just after the Minister had told me not to worry about the details because everything would be in the regulations and that everything would be all right on the night. The quotation goes back to 1838 when Benjamin Disraeli said:

"all power is a trust—that we are accountable for its exercise —that, from the people, and for the people, all springs, and all must exist."

If the Minister and her colleagues want the support of the House and an endorsement of their proposals if they want the House to allow them the power to use the regulations, they must tell us what they propose in the regulations. So far they have been singularly silent.

My last argument is about the Third world. Some hon. Members have taken the view that if someone wants to buy a product it is OK to sell it to them. It is a shocking indictment of the chemical industry's relationship with the Government, and of the Government themselves, that they are prepared to sell overseas products that are prohibited in the United Kingdom because they are known to be dangerous and because we know the adverse impact that they will have on our agriculture systems and environment. In view of the human and environmental disasters of recent years and of the knowledge that we have of the impact of western technology on underdeveloped agricultural communities, we should not agree to use underdeveloped countries as a dumping ground for products that are considered unsuitable for use here.

The legislation was prompted by actions in 1981, which resulted in a cartel being broken. The Government said that they did not want imports that would undermine our chemical industry and could not be controlled. Now they have the opportunity to prevent the export of undesirable materials and they are running away from the question. That is a matter of prime concern.

Some useful debates took place in the House of Lords. Lord Mackie summed up the argument about the export of pesticides when he said:

"However, we really cannot export dangerous chemicals to third-world countries which people do not know how to use and excuse that by saying that others will do so if we do not. It is rather like the old argument in the cartoon—which I always admired—of the two executioners, torturers, with their black masks, their execution axes, and so on, talking to each other at an idle moment. One of them is saying to the other, 'The way I see it, if we don't do it, someone else will!' I do not think that that is a good policy for a highly moral Government trying to help the third world." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 22 November 1984; Vol. 457, c. 728]

There are very many reservations about this Bill; that is one of them. I certainly hope that the Bill will be improved in Committee.

7.11 pm

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): I apologise to the House for having come in only moments ago. As hon. Members will know, I was here earlier. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hon. Members will appreciate that, as I am in the Chair of the Committee dealing with the Transport Bill, I can come in for only a short time during the dinner break.

I want to follow for a moment the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), because I think that he has got wrong the attitude of the chemical manufacturers in this country to the Third world. I believe that the British chemical industry takes an extremely responsible view, and when the hon. Gentleman reads what he said he may regret the criticisms that he made.

The point that is frequently misunderstood is that the chemical manufacturers formulate and manufacture in this country many items that are used on crops to control unpleasant things that mercifully do not exist in this country. In a question in the Indian Parliament in August last year, it was suggested that certain items of a DDT nature ought to be banned in India. The Indian Government made it abundantly clear that that was quite impossible if their malaria eradication programme and other similar programmes were to go forward. So, although we may not use in this country some of the chemicals that we make, their export to the Third world, provided the Third world Governments approve and their professional advisers know what is being done, is totally honourable.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Wells: I am sorry. I want to be very brief, and the hon. Gentleman did speak at great length.

ICI Plant Protection at Yalding is the biggest employer in my constituency which has a very large horticultural presence. Therefore, this is a very important debate for my part of Kent. What concerns me particularly is a fear that we may be too liberal about import restrictions and rules and too tight about export restrictions. Lord Belstead in another place indicated that the present informal arrangements, under which MAFF gives quick clearance to farmers' direct imports, will be incorporated in the regulations. I apologise to my hon. Friend if he repeated that, but I did not hear his speech.

Individual farmers, particularly in my part of the country, where the continent of Europe is only a few miles away, are experienced men. They have friends on the continent of Europe and they can go shopping and know what they are bringing back. Provided the products that they bring back are labelled in English and their workers understand and follow the safety regulations, that is fine. I am far more concerned about the indication, as I understand Lord Belstead's words, that there may be a large quantity procedure for merchants bringing in such items, provided the safety regulations are formulated in English. But these items of chemical manufacture may well not come from Europe. They could come from anywhere—even the Third world—and some of the formulation may be extremely doubtful.

I am therefore most anxious about any liberalising of imports, unless we look at the matter very closely indeed. Provided imports are guaranteed to be of the same quality and have the same protection instructions for the workers, I do not think that that is a bad thing, but I must emphasise the importance of quality.

I turn now to the question of confidentiality and the right to know, to which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred in passing. Within the United States there seems to be total freedom of information. At first sight, that is very praiseworthy, but the patents are steadily running out and, once they run out, the whole world will have not only freedom of information but freedom to copy. Unless a manufacturer is protected for a few years, expenditure on research and development will be reduced. That is something that I fear very much. Other hon. Members have already pointed out the vast contribution that this industry makes to the well-being of agriculture throughout the world. Unless research and development are protected, the ultimate consumer, particularly the consumer in the Third world, will be at risk.

The hon. Member for Workington spoke about the possibility of a ban on aerial spraying. I must declare to the House that Headcorn airstrip, in my constituency, houses one of the most efficient aerial spraying units in this country. That firm is spraying not only in the United Kingdom but world wide. Its pilots go all over the world. If British pilots are unable to qualify and gain experience, not only will we lose a valuable export, but the Third world will lose the services of British pilots, who are extremely skilled and experienced and responsible in the use of chemicals. Before we get over-excited about any safeguard proposals, therefore, we need to look at the overall pattern.

It is important that we consider enforcement. As I understand it, it is proposed that there should be 16 or 18 people to carry out enforcement. That seems to me to be nonsense. I believe that Her Majesty's Government have gone over the top in listening to the EEC style of debate with demands that voluntary control is unacceptable. The Minister and I know that at least one City livery company is providing policing in an important sector of another industry that comes under his umbrella. He will know that the Salters Company—and I have no authority from that company or from any of its officers to make this remark—makes a great contribution to the well-being of the chemical industry.

Surely an absolutely impartial organisation, such as a City livery company, could have taken its place in the British agrochemical supply and industry scheme which, after all, has brought in tremendous control. I believe that other hon. Members have spoken about that already. The Minister is aware of what has been done. Can we not break out of that European mould and realise that the British style of voluntary policing of schemes like this can work very well?

7.20 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I was glad to have the reassurance of the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) that the British chemical industry behaves responsibly abroad. It if behaves responsibly abroad—I have no evidence to suggest otherwise—I should dearly like to know which chemical industries do not, because there is ground for real misgiving that some practices by OECD member states in the Third world leave a great deal to be desired. That leads me to the fear that, as we have a development of trade and a more liberal trading arrangement, and as the Third world becomes ever more depressed, perhaps as a result of American economic policy, those irresponsible chemical industries may wish to come here.

I should like to refer to the final point that the hon. Member for Maidstone made. Whether we have an adequate involvement of skilled and competent voluntary agencies or not, and whether the provisions and plans of Her Majesty's Government provide for a proper public monitoring of such matters, which are vital, I have reason for very real anxiety about the future.

That anxiety was not relieved by the Minister of State's speech. He is an experienced and able occupant of the Treasury Bench. He must have known that there is concern on both sides of the House, perhaps more among Opposition Members. I was deeply distressed by the absence of the alliance Members, who claim to have an interest in these matters. If they had been here, they would have shared my anxieties about the Minister's speech. As I said, the hon. Gentleman is able and experienced, and must have expected the House to require rather more than high-minded commitments to high standards. Throughout his speech he kept telling us that the Bill was evidence of the Government's commitment to high standards and environmental decency. Then he passed the buck to the Parliamentary Secretary who, again, is an able and experienced Minister. He left her to reply at the end of the debate knowing that he had not given the House any detail. I suspect that the hon. Lady will not give us any either.

It is not good enough for the Minister to say that the Government have grasped the common thread that runs through serious problems and accepted the broad principles and commitments, but will refer to the detail in Committee. I do not know whether I shall be on the Committee, but, while it may take the same view that I take and say that it wants much detail, the Minister might avoid giving that detail if he can. It is not good enough. There is so much anxiety about modern chemicals in our society that the Government have an obligation to provide the House with information so that the House and the country are assured that regulations to protect the public interest exist.

It is interesting that in the debate two Conservative Members, who have been criticised mildly by their colleagues, spoke of their anxieties about the effect of aerial spraying on their gardens. The obvious answer is for them to invite their hon. Friends to go and sit in their gardens while the aerial spraying is proceeding. That

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

might be a sufficient reason for me to begin to look more kindly on aerial spraying. However, the fact remains that two experienced hon. Members expressed their anxiety, which is shared by hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens. The fact that that anxiety exists justifies the call for more information to be provided. I hope that when the Parliamentary Secretary winds up the House will be given some meat instead of merely the prospect of a little bone.

The risks are very serious. For example, I recall taking part in a debate in the Council of Europe only a little while ago, when I said to the OECD that there is an urgent necessity for adequate international conventions to cover the use of chemicals within the environment. I believe that the OECD would welcome the opportunity to take a leading role in that development. I trust that if the Government are so committed to high standards and are embracing the principles to which the Minister referred, we shall see a vigorous pursuit of that approach.

However, I have anxieties, because I recognise that the Government have been very laissez-faire in their commercial policies. I recognise that the South Yorkshire county council that they are about to abolish had to spend three years demonstrating that we were importing dangerous household electrical appliances, but it was difficult to get the Government to take any interest. I recognise that when the British hand tool industry was being destroyed by unfair competition, and when it won cases abroad by demonstrating that there was counterfeiting practice, the Government would not do anything about it. I have real fears that, when those irresponsible chemical industries—we have established that there are some—find that, because of world economic recession, their markets in the Third world or in other countries that are wiser than ourselves are contracting, they will see a more glistening opportunity in the United Kingdom. The present Government's record will compound the anxieties that are already expressed.

I am not in any way a Luddite about the environment. I am concerned about it. I share the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that there can be no yearning for a rural setting of idyllic value in which man starved, and became brutalised. However, at the same time, millions of our fellow citizens believe that the creation of a sterile landscape in a society with enormous farm surpluses and an environment in which man is utterly dispirited is not acceptable either.

Therefore, I welcome the Government's action if it is to make sure that the Bill is not merely a convenient whitewash that will satisfy our European partners, present no hindrance to the irresponsible and merely allow some liberal trade in poison that could be internationally and nationally disadvantageous. I hope that we can have an adequate assurance in the wind-up speech and sufficient information in Committee to provide us with some satisfaction.

I made an intervention in the Minister's speech about the nature of the advisory committee. There will have to be not merely the voluntary involvement of guild companies in monitoring but adequate contact and dialogue with the environmental organisations. I serve on the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. As the Minister knows, it is a substantial organisation. It has people of high quality and worth within its employment. I hope that that body, perhaps the largest of the environmental organisations in Britain, w have adequate involvement in and representation on a committee that is established.

The Agricultural Engineers Association has expresse the view that the pesticides safety precautions schem clearance arrangements are themselves insufficient. looked at the documents that I received from that bod As the Minister will appreciate, we have received enormous weight of briefing material. Looking at th body's evidence—it is not an organisation with which have had previous contact—I believe that such peop should also be involved so that a balance can be achieve in the advice that the Minister receives. The manufacturi industry must not have the dominant voice. The view the Public Health and Industrial Pesticides Council seem very valuable. The National Society for Clean Air also h a legitimate view to express. Such organisations should assured that their opinions and qualifications will recognised.

I believe that we have an international role to play. we are to play that role, we must establish adequa protection within these islands. In spite of the Minister high-minded commitment to decency, which was n supported by any factual content, my anxieties remai However, I maintain the hope that there will be bipartisan approach, which my hon. Friend suggested w possible.

7.30 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am pleased follow the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy whose views on the environment are well known and w respected in this House. Many hon. Members ha listened in the past to his speeches with great interest. T points he has put before the House today are worthy attention.

I have to declare an interest, as I have worked agriculture virtually all my life, but more actively befo I was elected a Member of Parliament. I was involved f a time in the sale of spray chemicals to farmers. Befo BASIS was set up and when spray chemicals were fi used in large quantities upon farms, the sale of tho chemicals and the advice that was given to farmers w somewhat haphazard. Therefore, the new volunta schemes and this Bill, which will, I hope, become an A are to be welcomed.

The industry has been concerned for some time abo the fact that a rather haphazard attitude towards chemica is still prevalent in certain tiny sectors of the farmi community. It is to the great credit of the Government th they have introduced this Bill. It is also to the great cre of the Opposition parties that they support it. It interesting that there was virtually no dissension about t Bill in the other place, even though various amendmen were moved with great aplomb and interest by Members. There has also been very little dissension on t Floor of the House this evening. Therefore, I hope that t Bill will have a fair wind.

We are all concerned about this problem, but I a worried that certain lobbies may jump upon this Bill as vehicle to put forwards their own exaggerated views. I a sorry that the hon. Members for Workington (M Campbell-Savours) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) a not present to hear my remarks, although I hope they w read them in the morning in the *Official Report*.

There is a danger that the anti-farming lobby and the Friends of the Earth, although I do not place those two bodies on the same level, and certain "green" movements which have been described in the past have painted a somewhat exaggerated picture of the spraying of chemicals on farmland. If in Committee amendments and new clauses are put forward by these groups, without any real knowledge of what takes place on farms and of the responsible attitude shown by farmers, the trade, manufacturers and those who advise them it will be a great shame. I hope that the Committee will resist any such attempts. The hon. Member for Workington made some exaggerated claims which he should back up in Committee. I say the same to the hon. Member for Caerphilly. Nevertheless, I do not doubt their good intentions in putting forward their views.

We are all agreed that full safeguards must be provided for some of the very expensive and dangerous chemicals that are being used by farmers. It is to the credit of the industry that there have been very few accidents. Nevertheless, one must not forget that accidents have occurred and that some accidents have not been officially reported. My hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) and for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) gave graphic descriptions of how they have been affected by spray drift. In no way would the House denigrate what my hon. Friends have said or diminish the force of their argument. However, it must be set in the context of the marvellous safety record that the industry has enjoyed during the last few years.

I am concerned that, because of the somewhat restrictive nature of the Bill, we might begin to devalue the great contribution that pesticides and herbicides and fungicides, which are not mentioned in the same context, have made to agriculture. The agricultural revolution of the last decade had been largely due to the careful and selective use of chemicals. The massive yields of corn and vegetables that we now enjoy and the fact that we have weed-free fields and pest-free vegetables are due to the research and development that has taken place in the chemical industry. It has been of great value to agriculture and should never be devalued by the House during its discussion of the Bill.

We must also never forget the great value of pesticides and herbicides to the Third world. Many Third world countries, which are in dire need of food and better agricultual practices, would be in an even worse position if it were not for the availability of chemicals, many of which have been manufactured and developed in this country. One has only to look at the extent of the maize crop in the African continent to understand that if the locust pest had not been controlled by chemicals, mainly from the air, the yield from those crops throughout the continent would have been disastrous.

The House would also be well advised to remember the value to our export trade of these chemicals, in particular chemicals for use in agriculture. We export each year chemicals to the value of £360 million. The amount of employment that is generated within the chemical industry, particularly in terms of agricultural chemicals, is very great. At present, 7,268 people are employed in the industry. If I have any misgivings about the Bill, they are that if restrictive clauses or amendments are made to it the chemical industry may suffer and unemployment may follow.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) said, during the last 25 or 27 years we have had the advantage of the voluntary pesticides safety precautions scheme, which has an advisory committee. Farmers have been advised by that committee. As a result, the number of accidents has been minimal and the misuse of chemicals has been very small. In addition to that scheme, the system known as BASIS was introduced in 1978. It was inaugurated by the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association—a merchants' organisation. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has already mentioned that UKASTA made representations to him that BASIS should be continued. I believe that he will be sympathetic towards that argument. There is no doubt that BASIS has been a great success. It has meant that merchant representatives and others who sell chemicals have gained far greater knowledge, that the storage of chemicals has been made much safer and that the transportation of chemicals has been improved because the various problems that surround their transportation have been reduced.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider whether the amount of voluntary assistance that BASIS has given to the chemical industry is dealt with in the Bill. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) made that suggestion. I believe that it would attract a great deal of support from both sides of the House. The advantage of monitoring and administration by BASIS is that it would cost the Ministry nothing. I bear in mind what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone that any new appointments which have to be made will inevitably cost money. When a system is working satisfactorily on a voluntary basis, I believe that it is important for the House and the Ministry to look very carefully at that system.

Certain questions remain to be dealt with, and in the few minutes that remain to me I should like to air them. This is an enabling Bill. Some disappointment has been expressed this evening on both sides of the House, and in another place, at the fact that the regulations have not been put forward. We are debating half in the dark because we do not know what regulations will be put forward and which chemicals will be recommended. I have great faith in the Ministry, my hon. Friend the Minister and his team, and I am sure that he has taken that point on board. If any way could be found to introduce the regulations in Committee, it would be of great value to the members of the Committee, and would allay many of the fears that have been expressed this evening.

I hope that the Bill will retain its flexibility. I was encouraged by my noble Friend Lord Belstead when he said that the Bill was not meant to restrain trade. We want as little compulsion in the Bill and the regulations as possible.

I am also interested in chemicals from abroad being available. In the past we have been a little worried about some of the material that has come in under the description "black drum material". The fact that some of the instructions on that material have not been in English has been mentioned. The PSPS has worked well with those chemicals, and the new regulations will be much tighter. Those chemicals should be available if farmers and growers wish to use them. Provided that they satisfy the regulations which will follow the Bill, I hope that those markets will be available for the agents who wish to import such material.

I am worried that the smaller manufacturer might find himself at some disadvantage against the larger

[Mr. John Carlisle]

manufacturer when the Bill becomes law. The House will be aware that most agricultural chemicals are manufactured by the large companies. Manufacturers should be able to introduce chemicals to the market with the protection and safeguards that the Bill provides.

Many chemicals and many of the solutions to the problems posed by weeds and pests are stumbled upon by accident. Plant Protection, part of ICI has been mentioned. I believe that even the chemical gramoxone, which has probably completely revolutionised cereal farming over the past few years, was stumbled upon by accident. Small manufacturers can develop chemicals, and I hope that the Bill will not stifle their endeavours.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to deal with the disposal of stocks. When the Bill becomes law, some fairly large stocks of chemicals may have to be withdrawn. I hope that some phasing out will be available, or a fair warning given to stockholders who have goods which they will find impossible to sell.

It is imperative to emphasise the educational part of the Bill. Storekeepers should understand the complexity and dangers of the chemicals that they handle. The advice given to them must be sound and based upon manufacturers' experience, research and development.

The transportation of the chemicals must be regulated; and it is most important that all operators should have full training. One of the great advantages and successes of BASIS is that operators have been brought into the scheme and educated. That is an essential part of the operation.

Mr. John: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that UKASTA wants BASIS to be made compulsory, because UKASTA is disadvantaged in training operatives by the cowboy operators who have no qualifications for the contract spraying that has been mentioned?

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He mentioned that point in his speech. I go a little further. The anxiety that UKASTA is showing about BASIS is that if the regulations become law, as we all hope they will, the scheme will collapse. There are already signs that people are leaving BASIS. UKASTA must do some hard talking to my hon. Friend the Minister to work out how BASIS can be kept going.

The Bill does not mention seed. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will know that there is a fairly large industry involving seed, 10 per cent. of which has been chemically treated. In Committee, some provision must be made for the import and export of such seed.

I hope that the officials who will monitor the scheme will have a great deal of knowledge, and that no cost or time will be spared in ensuring that the official investigators know the problems that they and farmers will face over the years.

This is a first class Bill. It deserves support from both sides of the House. Its success will depend upon the co-operation of farmers, growers, the trade and manufacturers. On the Floor of the House and in another place, we have seen and heard that that co-operation will be forthcoming. Therefore, I wish the Bill a fair wind.

7.46 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): It is rather unusual for me to join in a debate on agriculture because I do not represent an agricultural area. I represent a highly industrialised city. However, whenever Bills that mention food are presented to me I take an interest so that I can air one or two points that are dear to me.

The Bill is called the Food and Environment Protection Bill. We all recognise that there is a need for it. It is not contentious, although hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken of their misgivings and reservations and of what they would like added in Committee.

I recognise—I am sure that we all do—that the production of feed is essential to the health of the community. None of us is so foolish as to wish to inhibit or restrict good legislation. The Minister mentioned many of the hazards. Hazardous materials are becoming common. Pollution is causing great anxiety.

There have been one or two hiccups in some of the chemical factories in Manchester. Explosions have justifiably worried residents. Contamination floating over industrial areas can ultimately pass to agricultural areas. We recognise that the Minister needs the legislation.

The Bhopal disaster, involving methylisocyanate, was a salutary lesson for everyone and should make us doubly determined to see that such accidents do not happen again. Nevertheless, we must prepare ourselves. If anything should go wrong, there should be protection to ensure that people are safe.

Occasionally there have been one or two close calls. We all recognise that industrial chemicals can cause mishaps. Because of the possibility of major incidents, extreme caution must be exercised by the Ministry.

I am not an authority on pesticides, but I am sure that the Minister recognises that the general public are increasingly worried about the addition of chemicals and fear that far too many chemicals are used in crop management. I am sympathetic to that view, although a chemical company operates in my constituency, and I am obviously interested in its success. I am sure that it operates responsibly. It provides valuable opportunities for my constituents. The company must, however, face up to its responsibilities and be accountable. I am sure that the main chemical companies operate from that standpoint.

I have reservations about the Bill, especially clause 1, which gives powers to Ministers. On seeing such references in documents we think of delays. In too many crises, red tape and the transmission of information from remote areas to Westminster lose valuable time. That is not in the interests of quick decisions and remedies.

The Minister said that local government officers may carry out certain functions, but I have strong reservations about that. We need new administrative machinery to deal with these matters. I have an interest in the Institution of Environmental Health Officers. For a number of years I have been active as an honorary vice-president of that association and have referred to the problems confronted by environmental health officers. Those officers have high skills and great expertise. It is sad to realise that they lack statutory powers.

Only a few months ago I asked questions about the handling of food. I always register an interest when I look at the titles of Bills. On seeing the title "Food and Environment Protection Bill," I wondered why the various Departments did not get their act together to inspect food. I asked about salmonella poisoning which has occurred in geriatric hospitals throughout the country. Too many people have died from salmonella poisoning.

My questions about the handling of food were referred to various Departments—a question about hospitals was referred to the Department of Health and a question about the handling of food in prisons and remand centres was referred to the Home Office. On every occasion on which I asked whether it was possible for environmental health officers visiting the establishments to have statutory rights to inspect food, I was told that it was not possible. Governments seem to be hiding behind Crown immunity. The various Departments replied saying that medical officers or governors of prisons and remand centres can invite environmental health officers to inspect food, but I am dissatisfied with that. I believe that environmental health officers can provide a valuable service in protecting health and giving advice.

I hope that one day the various responsible Ministers will get their act together to deal with pesticides and other chemicals and ensure the safe handling of food. That matter is as important as the other aspects that we have debated. Environmental health officers should have extra powers making it unnecessary for them to have to be invited to inspect premises. They should have the right to deal with the contamination of food.

I believe that there is no difference between poisons in crops and poisons in the food that arrives on our plates. Environmental health officers working for the environmental health authorities, and indirectly for the Government, should be given more responsibilities and rights. Because the Government wish to cut expenditure, they are not keen to accept applications by local authorities to increase the number of environmental health officers in their service. The additional expenditure incurred in regulating the handling of food is an important consideration. I am sure that the environmental health officers would appreciate a comprehensive review, but I do not expect the Parliamentary Secretary to give us a positive assurance that that will occur. I am sure that the nation will be healthier and that there will be fewer deaths in our geriatric hospitals from salmonella poisoning if Ministers recognise the importance of food hygiene.

Unfortunately, the various Departments involved do not co-ordinate in using vital services. I do not understand why the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Home Office and the NHS cannot get on the same wavelength and provide protection in relation to the handling of food.

7.59 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House who have welcomed the Bill. We are glad to receive it from the other place. I am sorry that some Opposition Members have not spoken well of pesticide manufacturers and users. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) to advocate the banning of aerial spraying or the introduction of a new penal code of conduct. The only result would be that their constituents would ask them why the price of foodstuffs had increased so much. Unless normal economical farm spraying, under strictly controlled conditions, is allowed to continue, the cost of food which the housewife has to buy will increase.

I was particularly interested in the Bill because I was one of the few Members on either side of the House who did not think it was necessary. I have followed the records of farm accidents involving machinery and chemicals and all the other incidents which affect agricultural life. Over the years, the one scheme that has worked well is the voluntary scheme which has been in operation for 27 years and which the Bill seeks to abolish.

I cannot easily accept the abolition of an excellent scheme without a better reason than has been given for the Bill. I listened very closely to the excellent speech of the Minister of State, and I do not think he gave a meaningful reason for proceeding with the Bill. I do not regard the present voluntary control system for the use of agricultural chemicals as anything but excellent and first class. We have a record of safety and safe conduct unparalleled in modern chemical history.

I cannot understand why we must proceed apace with the Bill when so many other problems concern our electors, such as the Auld report on shop hours and the Errol report on licensing hours. Although this is a helpful and useful little Bill, I cannot understand why it is being pushed through at this stage in the life of this Parliament, instead of continuing with an excellent voluntary scheme which no one can say has fallen down in any way.

Mr. John: I am following the hon. Gentleman in his references to the voluntary scheme. There are at least two voluntary schemes involved in the Bill. One is BASIS in regard to the application of chemicals and the other is the pesticides safety precautions scheme. As I understand it, the Bill is necessary because imported chemicals made the voluntary scheme break down. That is why the Government have been forced to reconsider the voluntary code.

Sir John Farr: As always, the intervention by the hon. Gentleman is helpful and very much to the point. That was not my understanding. Perhaps I am wrong. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will be on the Standing Committee and will have an opportunity to pursue that point.

I was not aware that the voluntary scheme was not coping adequately as of today. There may be problems ahead. One cannot say for certain that that will not be the case, but the voluntary PSPS and the other legislation which impinges upon the manufacture, sale and use of pesticides have for 27 years given the country a level of protection for man, animals and environment which is second to none.

One used to read of unfortunate accidents when a deadly mix of farm chemicals had by mistake been put in the wrong container, perhaps a lemonade bottle, and unfortunately drunk by a child who later died. That has happened from time to time, but fortunately that stupid practice has been more or less wiped out. I assure the House that there has been no call either from users or manufacturers for the elaborate new code of practice which will be incorporated in the Bill.

This is not a Bill without cost. It will be necessary to employ 34 inspectors to operate the new compulsory system. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary will tell the House who will pay the extra cost. It may be recouped by charges or by a levy on the pesticides as they are sold, but it is certain that eventually it is the consumer who will have to pay. The House should be given further details. I gather that the 34 inspectors in the new team will be employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and by the Health and Safety Executive in the Department of Employment.

The most contentious provisions of the Bill are in part III. As hon. Members on both sides have said, it is difficult

[Sir John Farr]

to debate such nebulous provisions. We must have some guidance on the form which orders will take, or we will be giving any Government a licence to print money. The House will eventually insist that there must be much more detail about the form of the orders.

Part III says that regulations will lay down how advisers, contractors, and users of agriculture chemicals, from the date of the coming into force of the regulations, should act safely in the use of pesticides. The use of certain products from the air may be prohibited. There will no doubt be a provision requiring protective clothing to be worn. Other matters which will probably be covered in regulations are the minimum dilution rate and a restriction on application by systems other than those agreed by Ministers to be safe and efficient for the purpose. There will be other restrictions in the regulations, but without having them in front of us it is difficult to have a sensible debate about them.

When the regulations are produced, they should provide that no pesticide will be sold in Britain without instructions relating to its use being in English. It does not need a complicated or high-powered committee to realise that most of us do not understand foreign languages. For the sake of the public, rules relating to the safe handling, disposal and use of these materials should not be in a language other than English.

I would also like the shelf life of the chemicals to be incorporated in the regulations. Some chemicals behave differently when they reach a certain age. Often, after 18 months or two years pesticides change dramatically. They can break down and become dangerous to handle. As with cartons of milk or cream, I would like the recommended shelf life to be included in the regulations when they are produced.

It is also important to consider the obligation of the farming community to comply with part I in relation to the contamination of food. Several of my hon. Friends have said that the Bill provides widespread powers to the Minister to order the destruction of foodstuffs in certain circumstances. When referring to part I, my hon. Friend the Minister said that those powers would be used only in serious emergencies. Of course, the House accepts that such steps must be taken in serious emergencies, but why are not the words "serious emergency" included in the Bill? I suggest to the Minister that those words be inserted in the Bill in Committee so that the provision is not left in its present vague form.

I endorse what was said about the need for the draft regulations to be discussed and debated. It is essential that all the organisations concerned with the production and use of chemicals on the land are consulted properly. For instance, some technical items that are not included in the Bill have been raised by the Agricultural Engineers Association, which supports the Bill. It wishes to make some detailed points about the sort of spraying equipment used. It fears that the regulations will be based on the more usual sorts of spraying equipment and that more sophisticated and less used equipment will not be considered. The association believes it important to have ministerial assurances that it is consulted before the regulations are finalised, because it is responsible for making up sprayers and pumping machinery.

The association, like Opposition Members—I agree with them — believes that it would be sensible for operators to attend regular courses. They do not instruction in the mechanics of operating a pump, but need to know about scientific changes in chemi Although an operator may be familiar with every chen in 1985, in 1990 it may be a different picture and he be completely out of date.

With those few words, I support the Bill. It is not of the most important measures of this Parliament, during its passage it will receive my support.

8.14 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Glasgow): I welcome the Bill, but I have reservat about several clauses. I hope that the Bill will strengthened in some areas, but that task must be le the detailed scrutiny of the Committee.

Part I deals with the need to tackle large-s emergencies on land and at sea in as prompt and effic a way as possible. That is a laudable objective, b believe that local authorities should be featured on the of the Bill. For example, the Shetland Islands counc deeply worried about the perennial threat of major spillages in and around Sullom Voe. Edinburgh is a l way from Sullom Voe, and I believe that authorities s as the Shetland Islands council should be involved in scheme.

I shall concentrate on parts II and III and their attend schedules. Few hon. Members have spoken about par but it is of enormous importance to all of us in th islands. I do not wish to be parochial, but I am talking o about Scotland and its islands. It is especially impor to our fishermen. I relate my remarks to the fish industry, marine pollution and the offshore oil industry some ways, the fishing industry and our fisheries are m important than oil production, because oil, whether i used for fuel or for the development of protein, is fin whereas fish—the British Isles are surrounded by w could be called fish-rich seas—is a renewable resou if it is managed properly and is not too badly affected marine pollution.

Paragraph 3.1 of the Rayner report on marine pollut stated, in a paragraph entitled "Scrutiny of fishe research and development":

"The importance of dumping to the UK as a relatively ch means of waste disposal is considerable."

It also said:

"Our pre-eminent position in the dumping of industrial w and sewage sludge puts us under severe and moun international pressures; the onus is on the UK to justify position."

I have no doubt that Ministers will say that the Bill de with that responsibility.

It is important to emphasise that oil pollution in North sea and elsewhere is caused partly by shipping remind the House—Ministers may not need remind of this — that collisions and founderings are only small, if spectacular, part of such pollution. It has be estimated that founderings and collisions cause only ab 25 per cent. of pollution. A much larger problem of mar pollution by oil arises from the deliberate flushing of tanks with sea water.

The Minister will no doubt say that there is legislati to deal with that. I agree, but it is not a particula effective form of control and enforcement. *The Econom* stated on 11 February 1984:

"contrary to popular belief, shipping is not the main culprit North Sea oil pollution. Land run-offs, eg, from the flushing

used motor and industrial oils into drainage systems, generally contributes 65-75 per cent. of the oil in the sea. A paltry 1 per cent. comes from minor accidents on offshore oil rigs."

Having referred to pollution caused by land-based industries, I must compliment the river purification boards for the marvellous work that they do. I live on the Clyde and I am thrilled to hear—I have not seen them for myself—that salmon are returning to the upper Clyde. That is a tribute to the Clyde river purification board and the way in which it has dealt with pollution in that river.

Other aspects of pollution of our seas were outlined in that article in *The Economist*. For example, it reported:

"There is no international agreement directly covering pollution in the whole of the North Sea. Instead, there is a welter of laws and conventions, national and international, designed to control specific problems. However, some are relatively permissive; others poorly enforced; yet others languishing for lack of ratification."

I hope, because I welcome the Bill, that the proposals in part II will put right that driech state of affairs.

Pollution problems associated with oil exploration and production are of importance to the people of Scotland, particularly those who obtain their employment in the Scottish fishing industry. Oil can present many problems for fishermen. For example, oil-related pipes and other debris are sometimes washed up on beaches. The oil industry should accept responsibility for removing and disposing of such objects.

Damage is often done to fishing gear by oil-related debris. After an exploration rig has completed drilling, all debris should be removed by those directly involved in that exploration. Following a survey, a certificate should have to be obtained by those concerned stating that the area has been checked and is free of debris. Such a step would greatly help Scottish fishermen.

I could give various examples of the problems that we face north of the border. Recently, a large anchor and 1,000 feet of chain were picked up in Coalgrave sound by a tanker waiting to berth at Sullom Voe. People in Shetland believe that the anchor and chain were almost certainly lost—I cannot believe that they were discarded—from a vessel engaged in offshore construction. The tanker picked up that anchor and chain when lifting its own anchor.

I may be seen to be defending the fishermen—it is right that I should be seen doing that—but I admit that they are not entirely blameless in relation to marine pollution. For example, *The Scotsman* in an article on 27 January last said about fishermen:

"plastic pollution is killing millions of birds, fish, whales, seals and sea turtles, marine scientists report . . . Large pieces of plastic nets often break off, becoming what are called 'ghost nets' that present a continuous floating threat. Mr. Robert Day, an ornithologist at the University of Alaska in Fairbank, said seabirds often became entangled when they dived for trapped fish."

I readily acknowledge that fishermen also have a part to play in reducing the pollution of our seas.

Monitoring is dealt with in clause 12. The Rayner report—I hasten to point out that it was published in 1982—said about monitoring :

"Monitoring arrangements are not uniform. Some sites receiving only limited categories of waste are not monitored at all while others, notably those receiving sewage sludge and liquid industrial waste, require a high level of effort. Because of staff shortages"—

the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir. J. Farr) spoke of the numbers of staff monitoring the whole programme—

"the monitoring programme is well behind schedule as regards the assessment of data collected and the publication of reports."

Have the recommendations in paragraph 3.47 of th report in relation to the need for additional staff bee adopted by the Government?

I welcomed the Minister's remarks about exemption as provided for in clause 7. He spoke of static gear and th need to protect it. This is an important issue for man fishermen in Scotland, particularly those in the Weste isles. Will the exemptions cover fish farmers who have pu down sea cages in sea lochs and in the voes in Shetland Will they also cover offshore exploration and research?

In considering part II of the Bill and the scuttling c vessels, it is interesting to note that the Shorter Oxfor English Dictionary defines "scuttle" as

"To withdraw in a precipitate and undignified manner fro the occupation or control of a country."

That is not the definition we seek in this context. Howeve it goes on to give another definition of "scuttle":

"To cut or bore a hole or holes in the sides or bottom of vessel, for the purpose of sinking her)."

Will this definition cover the abandonment of offshor drilling structures when or after they end their operationa lives? This is an important issue which we, th Norwegians and others will have to face. What will happe to the concrete structures, to the sub-sea systems, once th oil has gone from certain fields? Do these rigs or structure come under the term "marine structure" that appears in th Bill? These are important issues to our fishermen. Th fishing industry is important to the nation and the Hous will recall that I talked earlier about the fish-rich sea surrounding the British Isles.

I shall address myself now to part III. As the son of Hull fishergirl and the grandson of an Aberdeen fishergirl I know rather more about fishing than agriculture but tha will not prevent me from putting some questions to th Minister. I welcome the attempt more effectively t regulate the use of pesticides in the British Isles. However I want to see some changes made to the Bill. I hope tha I am selected as one of those to consider the Bill i Committee, but that is beyond my powers to influence.

I acknowledge that clause 15(4) requires Ministers t consult the Health and Safety Commission over propose regulations with health and safety implications. Such a arrangement does not facilitate free and open representa tion of the main interests involved in pesticide control. I fairness to Ministers, I should declare an interest. I am sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union of which the union representing agricultural workers i now a part. In the light of widespread lack of public confidence in the pesticides safety precautions scheme a a voluntary or statutory scheme, will the Minister give a assurance that agricultural workers and their represen tatives will in future have a direct input into the decision making procedure on pesticide safety clearance? I remind the Minister that it has been suggested that under the new arrangements no information about pesticides should be disclosed to the public without the consent o manufacturers. I ask the Minister to give the House a assurance that no such escape clause will be available t manufacturers. Does she agree that the public have a right to all information that is required to be disclosed t authorities under the proposed statutory scheme?

It is proposed that the number of agricultural inspectors be increased by 18 to enforce the proposed pesticides controls. Will the Minister state how such enforcement can be undertaken properly when the number of inspectors is insufficient to deal with the majority of occupational

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

health and safety risks that are faced by agriculture workers and others in related industries, bearing in mind the numerous undertakings in which pesticides are used?

I note the proposal that Ministers should have powers to lay down the maximum permissible residues for pesticides in agricultural products, but will the Minister confirm that this will not provide a means for circumventing the EEC scheme for statutory maximum limits for residues in favour of the existing UK voluntary scheme? Given the current reliance on company information and expertise from within the agrochemical industry and the attendant lack of public confidence in toxicity assessment, will the Minister give the House an assurance that adequate resources are available to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for the implementation of the Dumping at Sea Act and to the Health and Safety Commission to allow the appointment of independent inspectors?

In view of the hazards attendant upon the use of pesticides and the responsibility of both manufacturers and suppliers to the user, does the Minister intend to make approval of specific pesticides conditional upon the provision of adequate instruction and training by suppliers for all users, who in turn will have a similar duty to train workers? I do not expect answers to all my questions this evening. However, I shall be grateful if the Minister says that she will write to me to respond to the questions that she does not answer this evening.

I give the Bill a cautiously optimistic welcome. Marine pollution is a serious problem for one of our indigenous industries. The Minister knows that I keep a rather sharp eye on what takes place in Brussels on the common fisheries policy. If the fishing industry is managed properly and if we reduce marine pollution, the industry will be with us for many more generations than offshore oil and gas. As I have said, I give the Bill a cautiously optimistic welcome in the belief that a good deal needs to be done in Committee.

8.38 pm

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has raised some interesting matters which I hope he will pursue in Committee. He talked about petroleum installations in the North sea. It would be necessary to obtain the consent of the Government or the Department of Energy before the installations and structures could be sited and are obligated to remove them at the termination of work in certain fields. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising such matters, and I shall study them in great depth.

My hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) raised some fascinating issues, some of which I shall take up.

We have the Bill before us because of an infringement of article 85 of the treaty of Rome. I think that the Minister will acknowledge that the operation of the voluntary scheme was considered to be a restrictive practice. However, I must pay tribute to the remarkable work of those associated with it and their success over the past quarter of a century. The successful operation of the scheme and the existence of a monopoly practice which was inconsistent with the competition theories within the Community made it necessary for the Bill introduced. If a statutory undertaking replaces a vol one, there is no reason to say that the successor v unsuccessful. I wish the Bill success.

A statement of intentions on the regulations ha issued by the Minister. That will help us to a extent. On 12 February, in a written answer, my Friend the Parliamentary Secretary referred to the "to circulate a new consultation document detailing the pr regulations and the administrative arrangements whic accompany them in the late spring."

Surely that document will appear before Report. that the intervention will be timely and that we will t to discuss the document then. My hon. Friend cont

"The consultations on these proposals will continue long as necessary, but our aim is to lay the regulat Parliament this autumn, with a view to their entry int early in 1986."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985 73, c. *107*.]

That is a long shot. It seems to me that part III enabling Bill, which is very important, will ne properly discussed. That is not the right way to han legislation.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of S extremely sympathetic and has been doing rema work in his Department. However, he will understa difficulties of Back Benchers who wish to grappl important matters. I hope that he will reconsider the and make the documents available to us in draft f even though that may not be the final form—so t can see their general format and decide what argu should be adduced.

On part I, I agree that the Bill gives no definitio emergency. I am thinking, for instance, of Bho India; of Windscale, where radioactive iodin polonium escaped; or at Seveso where there was an of toxic chemicals in 1976. Those were emergencies.

The Energy Act 1976 covered emergencies, such creating an emergency in the market. The Gove have substantial powers to intervene in such cases i to set the price of oil, to purchase it, and so on, attempt was made in that legislation to defi emergency. Flexibility is required. It is essential t Government should be able to operate quickly. authorities could not expect to be consult circumstances in which Governments have to opera lightning speed to mitigate any damage.

Reference has been made to the idea of compe for innocent third parties. Companies may g liquidation. Tragedies may occur. A farmer may lo of his stock or all of his crops. The Government table an amendment to set up an ex gratia fu compensation.

On part II of the Bill, I take up the question of du at sea, to which the hon. Member for Greenock a Glasgow has referred. I noted with alarm the repea clause 14 of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974, but hav agreeably surprised that the legislation has been re the Bill. It includes the Oslo convention of 1974 London dumping convention of 1975. The protoco Oslo convention of 1983, covering incineration at also incorporated.

The independent review of the disposal of radi waste at sea—the Holliday report—was publish November. We had been utilising our authority un convention to dump low-level waste in certain deep

areas of the Atlantic, and I was glad to see in the Holliday report that the dumping had only a very limited impact on man and marine life. It would be a great shame if permanent discontinuance could disturb the nuclear industry and it could not resort to such dumping in future. My hon. Friend the Minister will say that the ad hoc scientific review of the London dumping convention has yet to appear, and he will probably refer me to the site suitability review of the Nuclear Energy Agency, but he should say something today. Is that avenue to be closed for ever so that nuclear waste cannot be dumped at sea at all? If so, an important option will be lost. If dumping cannot be done at sea, or in space — which is too expensive—Governments will have to dump the waste on land. One must consider the most suitable environmental option available. I think that the sea should be considered further.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) made an interesting point about burial under the seabed. It stands to reason that if waste cannot be buried in the Atlantic, even in canisters, it will also be forbidden to bury it under the seabed, because one would have to operate through the water. The only alternative would be to burrow out from the shore and form caverns under the sea. Perhaps my hon. Friend will clarify such points. It is important that the Committee should know what it is talking about.

Turning to part III, I pay tribute to the pesticides safety precautions scheme, which has done a remarkably good job for a number of years. It has coped with about 4,500 pesticides. The agricultural chemicals approval scheme covers another 700 chemicals. A Royal Commission recommended that the two bodies should be merged. Is that in my hon. Friend's mind?

The Minister has given the Advisory Committee on Pesticides a statutory form. We shall have to study its constitution, and it will be discussed in Committee.

I am surprised that in such a long debate no one has mentioned one problem connected with agriculture. The scale of pesticide use will be reduced further and further as, in the course of time, chemicals cease to be effective. Chemicals are becoming less and less effective as insects develop greater resistance. As the insects are strengthened, the chemicals grow weaker.

No one has referred to the growing area of biotechnology, which is providing some of the routes ahead. Biotechnology has stimulated crop yields. It is making crops resistant to disease by fortifying their immunity, and it is being utilised to alleviate environmental stress. Crop protection agents based on microorganisms — for example, provide the fungal material that controls aphids and white fly in glasshouses — is a case in point. From bacteria grown in a fermenter, a product has been developed by Microbial Resources Limited for the destruction of the mosquito larvae. If chemicals will not function, perhaps we should consider these alternatives. It preserves the environment and has no side effects with which we need concern ourselves.

As to the export of pesticides, an article in *The Times* of 16 December 1984 said:

"Britain, the world's third largest manufacturer, has no notification procedures and no restraints on exports."

As a result of the Bill, we shall have modified procedures. I pay tribute to the other place for making some useful amendments. Clause 15(11)*(b)* was one, and that requires exporters

"for the fulfilment of the government of the United Kingdom of any international obligation to supply information".

Paragraph (c) makes provision:

"to enable the government of the United Kingdom to determine what action it should take in order to fulfil an international obligation of any other description."

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that there have been about 10,000 deaths in the Third world nations. The United Kingdom has had nothing like that. It is incumbent on the Governments of industrial countries to take deaths in the Third world seriously. I should like clause 15 to be tightened. That could be considered in Committee.

I have a document which says that it is not the full answer for the exporting country to inform the importing country of its regulations relating to pesticides and the reasons for them and, having been given that information, the importing country must specifically request that the export takes place. It should be remembered that some of the people involved are not erudite in the sciences but have a problem that must be dealt with immediately. The result is that they import the material and it leads to many casualties. While considering a major Bill, we should address that problem by suitable amendments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) said that aerial crop spraying is important. I agree that it is probably the only way in which forests can be sprayed adequately. If the industry is faced with large-scale infestation, aerial spraying is essential. However, is it essential to spray from the air crops in a field of perhaps only two or three acres? A vehicle is manoeuvrable but aircraft are not, and yet they must turn in a small space. While turning, therefore, they spray hedgerows, allotments and gardens, doing unaccountable damage to all species, including insects and birds. We should not forget that aerial spraying might account for only 2 per cent. of pesticide applications.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said that, of the 5·3 billion hectares of crops that were treated with pesticides in 1982, 360,000 hectares were sprayed from aircraft. That represents a significant proportion—6·8 per cent. As many firms are involved, could we not screw down more rigorous conditions to ensure that people and the countryside are safeguarded? My hon. Friend the Minister will rightly say that the Civil Aviation Authority will do all the necessary monitoring. I have already said that I have been sprayed during the past five years. I was not notified by any farmer that there would be spraying. I understand the problems associated with aircraft—that they have to come straight down the hillside and turn fairly sharply at the boundary. Notification procedures alone are not satisfactory. I should have thought that my hon. Friend could work out a much better system. Perhaps a licensing system would be more effective.

I dare say that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the permitted distance has been extended from 75 ft to 200 ft on a horizontal path from houses, but is that adequate when dealing with aircraft flying at 200 ft? The Belgians have stipulated that spraying should not be done within 2,000m of dwellings or within 300m of a single house. Denmark specifies 300m for a single house, the Netherlands between 100m and 150m and the Federal Republic of Germany 50m to 100m.

I support the Bill. It has been thrust on the United Kingdom, but we have no alternative. We can argue about it in Committee, but I regret that we shall have our hands

[Mr. T. H. H. Skeet]

tied behind our backs. It is enabling legislation which it will be hard to modify without understanding completely what is going on. However, I trust the Minister to do his best in the interests of industry, the environment and the country.

8.57 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate but the Committee considering the Local Government Bill was sitting most of this afternoon. I therefore left this issue in the capable hands of my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). We rarely feature together. It is relevant that the last time was a debate on overseas aid during a Supply day initiated by the Liberal party. The issues associated with the Bill and food to the Third world are related. They concern the health of people and the health of our planet.

In answer to a question posed earlier by the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), the Bill is before us because it is a response not only to international pressure, which I support when it moves in this direction whether it emanates from the general diplomatic community or from the European Community, but in response to a public mood. The public believe that it is essential for there to be control of activities that are a necessary part of our food production process, but that have sometimes been a threat to the right balance between the technical developments and the natural response to looking after our heritage.

I know that the Government accept that it is important that we see this legislation in the context of its international dimension. Therefore, is the Parliamentary Secretary satisfied that if the intention behind the legislation is carried through, and we see the details of the subordinate legislation, we shall have legislation as good as that of any of our European partners or of western Europe generally? That must be our objective in controlling pollution by chemicals, in regulation and marketing, and in making sure that our food is healthy. We must move increasingly to a healthy food society away from what is called the trash food society, and we must ensure that we have the highest standard among our colleagues and competitors.

The Parliamentary Secretary must address another important point. In the past, outline legislation such as this has been introduced but it has been a decade or more before it has been firmed up. The best example, which does not emanate from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is the Control of Pollution Act. The Parliamentary Secretary will know that only recently has a large part of that Act been enforced, 10 years after it was first enacted. I hope that with this Bill we shall see the whole work soon and are not left to wait for the subordinate legislation for years. People want to see not just the outline but the substance.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) in his place. He will know that we have to ensure that the Bill is not full of loopholes and exemptions that will result in us coming back again. As the Parliamentary Secretary will know, tomorrow we are debating in Committee the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Bill, a Bill required because the first Act did not deal with a blatant loophole. That loophole meant special scientific interest could be ploughed of in the first three months after notificatio

It has been asked why we need compuls voluntary arrangements had — the hon. Harborough said — worked well. The ar unless there is a statutory framework, guarantee that people do not abuse the free have. The Wildlife and Countryside Act evi a way that the whole House recognised and b appalled. I hope that the Minister will acce why we cannot allow the Bill to have exemp which a coach and horse could be driven. tightly drawn provisions. We must not be pe from the right path in making the legislatio

The Bill may reflect a move away from revolution of the last century and the revolution of this century, to the environmen of the next century. I hope that it does. responded in the 19th century to the needs This century, we responded to the requirem our farmers to produce more food. We need the food that is desperately required, not just the world, is produced. One could go into of doing that worldwide. We now need to doing all these things—these are the tasks t are charged with supervising and dealing production society is increasingly en sensitive.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Godman) and other hon. Members have said to ensure that all that we do is in that context. we should ensure that our litter is biodegr containers, which may be thrown on the gr not be harmful to the environment, and s pollutants. We have to ensure that we use ar chemicals in a way that is sensitive and s what we require our producers — the fishermen—to do.

It is increasingly important that, whatever are in power—I am trying to avoid party p —there is greater co-ordination between not only between the Ministry of Agricultu and Food and the Department of the Env between those Departments and the Welsh Offices. In what we do we must ens information base, the data banks, the avail and the comparisons with our partners in elsewhere are used by us properly across development — and obviously this ap Departments which have responsibility for and industry and so on. We must ensure information is available so that the mechanisms provided by the Bill are use spectrum of our national life.

All of us are, in the time span of this w a minute time. It is our principal task while to make sure that time is not ended by our

Mr. John: The hon. Gentleman is waking

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Por John) is getting worried because he has marches on me, but he will well know that dictate the order in which we are called away on this planet, and that must be a consolatio

will know, as I do, that anybody with Welsh blood lives a longer and richer life than many other people. Indeed, all Celts are normally included in that category, and I can claim Scots blood too.

Because we are here for such a short time, our task is to be stewards in all that we do. We are lucky — in words that are familiar to everybody, not only to Members of Parliament — that we have in this country a very green and pleasant land. We must therefore be on our guard to ensure that the short-term gain does not lead to a long-term loss.

That is what the Bill is concerned with, producing for tomorrow but losing for the future. Because of our great responsibility as stewards, we must make sure that we frame not hollow legislation but an expanded series of enactments to do the job of stewarding with increased vigour and effectiveness.

It is trite nowadays to say that the world faces a food catastrophe. The people who live in the Horn of Africa are probably the most evident examples of that. We know that the world also faces an environmental catastrophe. Less and less of our land is cultivable for an ever growing number of people. The population growth projections are horrifying when one reflects upon them. We therefore have a collective responsibility to make sure that our bit of the world, the bit that is our backyard, has proper food and environmental protection. We hope that the Bill will be the launch pad for effective proposals in complete, not outline, form which will be increasingly supported by all parties in the near future.

9.7 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The debate has been constructive. At times I felt that the only slightly beleaguered person was the Minister. No doubt the Parliamentary Secretary in her reply will explain her situation in that respect.

It was particularly apposite that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) made the point that hon. Members throughout the debate have been constructive. We are conscious that this Bill, like so many Bills which are of a semi-technical nature, may easily be wrongly drafted so that the end product is defective. As outlined by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 has been agreed by hon. Members on both sides of the House to be defective. I must apologise to the House for having been absent from the Chamber for part of the debate. Through the usual channels, I have been involved in discussion of the business of the Committee which tomorrow will consider the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Bill. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are anxious to correct the anomalies of the 1981 Act.

This Bill is yet another example of agriculture impinging on the environment, or possibly the environment impinging upon agriculture. I wish that the Government had treated the subject in that way. It would have been better if a Minister from the Department of the Environment were to respond to the debate. In the Committee on the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Bill tomorrow a Minister responsible for agriculture will be part of the team.

The debate and the advance publicity has tended to concentrate on pesticides. That is not surprising because many of us realise that the events in Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" have not been true of our island in th that some people thought in the 1960s, although th be applied to many parts of the world.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, (Mr. Howells) was right to criticise cuts in expendit soil surveys. The nation cannot afford to allow its go unresearched and unmonitored. Halving the available bodes ill for the future of agriculture. A about that is felt on all sides of the House.

The debate has been useful and constructive b the issues affect all our constituents, whether they town or in country. The hon. Member for Torrid Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) stressed that we consumers and that we are all worried about what is food. Pesticides used to treat crops have an effect food.

I hope that the Opposition's approach is not nec My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. made it clear that pesticides have brought great adva to agriculture, horticulture and forestry. We have ma to increase cropping and to take some of the hard wo of agriculture. However, we must get the Bill righ

As the Minister said, the debate is not about agric alone, but about pesticides and other chemicals, u hospitals for example. The issue affects all peopl work with chemicals.

On 20 November 1984 my hon. Friend the Meml Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) asked about the link be cancer among workers and the use of pesticides. February my hon. Friend the Member of Workingto Campbell-Savours) also raised that issue.

In the *Lancet* of 14 May 1983 an interesting tab published. I mention it, not to try to prove a point remind the House that the *Lancet* concluded that the a higher incidence of malformations among the ch of agricultural workers and groundsmen — people use chemicals—than in other groups. I do not argu that is conclusive, but I remind the House that w talking about almost every occupation.

Pesticides obviously spell danger. They can danger to users and, as the hon. Member for Bedford North (Mr. Skeet) said, to innocent bystanders. The might go off course and affect people who are walki a footpath, standing by the roadside or driving al street. So it is not only the people who use the pes who are at risk, nor is it only people. The hon. M for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) raised a point on claus which affects flora and fauna, and suggested that pe more attention should be paid to this. Modern pest are more effective and more complicated than predecessors and there are therefore more accompa worries and dangers in addition to the problem production.

I shall deal with the Bill in chronological order a a few words about each of the parts.

Part I deals with the powers and duties o Government in the case of emergency, and obvious Opposition understand the reasons why it is being br forward and support the motives for introducing thi of the Bill. We are a little concerned, however, abo way in which local authorities appear not to have consulted and the fact that there does not appear to role for them. I understand absolutely the need for —that is the whole point of an emergency—but that there should be a much greater initiative to involve the local authorities. It is often the local auth

[Dr. David Clark]

that have the skilled personnel and the officers experienced in the quality of food. In view of the restricted numbers of staff available to the Minister, it is quite plain that he will have to rely on local authority staff. So I hope that he will pursue that further and perhaps during the Committee stage give us a little more reassurance on that point.

I wonder whether the Minister could also give us some assurance about accidents that might occur at sea. Since I represent a port constituency, I am very conscious of this danger. I have put down a number of questions to try to glean information and I know that the Government have been trying to identify certain safe havens along the United Kingdom coastline to see where damaged tankers or vessels with dangerous cargoes could be isolated if an emergency occurred. The Minister quoted the case of the Aeolian Sky off the Portland Bill, which came to nothing, as it happened, but in this case we are involving the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Transport and other Ministries. Is the Minister absolutely certain that his fellow Ministers are aware of and able to co-operate in this particular exercise? We recognise the need for action and we must get it right if we possibly can.

Part II deals with dumping at sea. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) elaborated on this point and made some very useful and sensitive inquiries. As we all know, this Bill repeals the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. When an Act is repealed it is inevitable that there is concern. The fact that the Oslo conference and the London dumping conference, which basically govern the Government's attitude and action with regard to the sea, are not mentioned in this new Bill causes us some concern.

Basically, however, my worry is about clause 8 of the Bill, which says that the licensing authority, when deciding whether material should be disposed of at sea,

"shall have regard to the need — (i) to protect the marine environment . . . and (ii) to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea".

That is quite clear, but it goes on to say:

"may have regard to such other matters as the authority considers relevant."

I think that the Minister of State reiterated the point today that he made in a written answer on 14 February, when he said that the Bill

"contains all the necessary powers to implement the international conventions on dumping at sea". — [*Official Report*, 14 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 263.]

Certainly part II contains powers, but what it does not always do, in common with part III, is impose obligations. There is a difference there, which we shall want to probe in Committee.

I should like to explain that further. As the House knows, our attitudes and actions are governed by the Oslo convention. Implementation was incomplete. In a sense, the Bill does nothing to rectify that. The key aspect of the Oslo convention, which goes unmentioned in the Bill, is in the final section of annex III. Dealing with the principles governing the issue of licences, it states:

"in applying these principles, the practical availability of alternative means of disposal or elimination will be taken into consideration."

That is a very important point. When it has been raised on previous occasions the Government have come up with three answers. First, they have said that it would not be relevant to certain operations such as the deposit of materials from harbour works. Secondly, they have said that one should not single out any one criterion from the Oslo convention annex. Thirdly, they have said that the availability of alternatives to sea dumping was in any case always taken into account by the licensing authorities.

Let me examine those three answers. The first reason is spurious. If there are no other means of disposal, the dumping licence could always be granted. Again, the second point seems to be invalid. The need to consider alternative disposal options is not a criterion like others in the annex, but an obligation. That comes back to the point that I was making about powers and obligations. That leaves only the third reason. Why on earth cannot the Government accept an amendment if they already do what is required? I hope that the Government will feel able to amend the Bill in Committee, perhaps to alter schedule 3 to include a provision meaning that the alternative practicable means of dumping are considered.

I emphasise this point strongly. I have said it previously at the Dispatch Box. I see that there is a statement in today's edition of *The Guardian* that emphasises it. The Prime Minister of Sweden is again beginning to call for economic action against Britain. We are now the bad neighbours in Europe. That applies to acid rain and dumping in the sea. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd made clear, we use the North sea as a dump far more than any other nation. Some 98·8 per cent. of the total sewage sludge dumped in the North sea is dumped by Britain.

I checked the licences from my area to see what is being dumped. If my people realised what was being dumped in the North sea off the port of Tyne, they would be horrified. Industrial effluent from fine chemical manufacture is dumped in liquid form—I am not talking about dredged spoil or sewage. Ammonium salts and salt solution from fine chemical manufacture are dumped. Pulverised fuel ash and sewage sludge are dumped. I could go on. I am worried immensely that phenolic effluent, the remains of pesticide manufacture, is dumped. That material is licensed by the Government to be dumped in the North sea. That causes alarm to the fishermen in my constituency and also to our neighbours across the water. I warn the Government that unless they become environmentally conscious, which they are not in spite of their self-proclamation, they will be isolated in Europe and we shall pay the economic cost for it.

May I deal with the regulations. Almost every hon. Member who has spoken today pressed the Government on this point. We are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. We understand the Minister's intention. We have before us his declaration of intent. However, a number of Opposition Members doubt the Government's commitment to delivering many of the things that they say they can deliver. In the other place, and from both sides of the House tonight, there have been demands that the draft regulations must be put before us. It is ridiculous for those draft regulations to be withheld.

The Minister of State said that he did not want to prejudge the outcome of the consultations with other groups, but he is consulting because he is releasing the proposals for regulations without which the Bill is an empty vessel. The Minister must be well aware that the elected Members of Parliament have the right to a say in the formulation of those regulations and that all the groups he is consulting, ranging from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to the National Farmers Union, are

calling for the regulations to be laid before the House before the Bill is passed. I urge the Government to do this as strongly as I can.

Just before the Bill left the other place the Minister promised peers that he would consider whether it would be possible to circulate a detailed statement about the proposed regulations. I understand that his right hon. Friend has retracted that promise, which I very much regret. I am referring not to the declaration of intent but to the announcement by Lord Belstead on 5 February that he hoped to be able to publish a detailed statement of the proposed implementation regulations. We understand that they will not be forthcoming. I am referring not to the declaration of intent—I may be wrong about this—but to the reference sheet issued by the Library of the House of Commons, the consultation paper on the regulations. I urge the Government to honour the pledge given by Lord Belstead.

One of the other reasons that was advanced for this move is that one can trust civil servants. I am afraid that over the years a number of hon. Members have become a little worried about civil servants. I asked somebody to look at the official records for 30 years ago, which have just been released by the Public Record Office. I had not realised that just 30 years ago a working party was set up to consider the precautionary measures to be taken against toxic substances used in agriculture. It was chaired by no less a person than Professor Zuckerman as he then was. There was also a panel that considered the retail sales of proprietary pest control products. These committees met between 1950 and 1953. It was fascinating to discover that 30 years ago they recommended the same controls as we are discussing tonight and, indeed, further controls that we are not even discussing tonight. There is a lesson to be learned from that. I would advise hon. Members to check the records because they are very illuminating.

It was suggested in the first report that warning notices should be put up on field gates where spraying had taken place or was taking place. This was to be done "in the public interest." I am sure that that would appeal to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North. Another point that was raised was that doctors and hospitals should be forewarned if spraying with organophosphorous pesticides was to take place in the area. One of the problems nowadays is that doctors are unable to treat those who have been affected by spray drift because they do not know what that spray drift consists of. It is interesting to note that both those recommendations were suppressed by the Ministry committee which met subsequently. That is what happened to the regulations that were advanced 30 years ago.

Lord Zuckerman's second report said that all new pesticides should be registered by law and all pesticide contractors should be licensed. That report, again, was emasculated by Ministers and when the regulations appeared in draft they were in a different form. Although the committee recommended statutory control, it never happened. If we look through all the records we find that similar things come up time and time again. We are worried at the idea of regulations being left in the hands of bodies other than the House.

We are not just talking about pesticides affecting crops; we are talking about pesticides eventually affecting individuals. That is why there has been a demand for freedom of information from both sides of the House. I cannot understand why matters are being kept secret. It is no use the Minister going half way because the information is available. Most of the agrochemical companies are multinationals and most of them have American connections.

As an experiment, together with the Friends of the Earth, I wondered whether we could obtain information about glyphosate. It is a chemical rather similar to paraquat but more effective. We filed to the United States and we have the information. It is available here on microfiche. It is available to anyone, and to any other chemical company. If it is available in the United States it should be available here. A further point that is often raised is that its availability would disclose company information. That is not so. I have the print-out of some of those microfiches and the company information is left blank. The microfiche does not tell us how to make the chemicals. People do not want to know that, but it tells them what is in the chemicals.

The important point is—the Americans have this right and we must, too—that such information protects not just the public; a proper screening method also protects the manufacturer from other unscrupulous manufacturers.

There are many other matters about which I could have talked, but my hon. Friends have covered them. We believe that the Bill is sound, and the framework is right. We should like to play our part in filling that framework because from experience it has seemed to us, for example, with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, that when we have left matters to regulations they have been found wanting.

9.32 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): Beleaguered I may be, but I am grateful for all the points which have been raised today. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have listened to them with great attention, and I feel that we have had a constructive debate. The variety of points made shows how widespread is the interest in the subject of the Bill and how strongly held these views are. The fact that so many hon. Members have spoken today and their general support for the principles underlying the Bill strongly vindicate the Government's decision to bring forward legislation on this matter.

My colleagues and I shall of course consider carefully all that has been said. Some of the points raised we had heard before in another place but some of them were new. I shall ensure that they are all given full attention before the Bill moves on to its next stage in the House.

It is understandable that many of the questions put to the Government today were about the way in which we shall use the powers that we are seeking. We shall endeavour to provide answers to those questions as the Bill proceeds, and I hope that we shall be able to reassure questioners that the Government are anxious to introduce practical, realistic and environmentally sound arrangements. On the matters on which there will be further consultation, I can give a firm undertaking that final decisions will not be made until the views of those affected have been examined.

I took as many notes as I could during the debate. If I do not answer all the points that were raised because of the

[Mrs. Peggy Fenner]

limited time, I assure hon. Members that I will respond to them later. Of course, many of them are Committee points.

Many hon. Members wanted to know what would be in the regulations and wanted the opportunity to express their views on them. This is a basic matter and it is natural and reasonable that they should want further detail. There is at present no power to make such regulations. The first necessary step is to take these powers, which means that Parliament must decide exactly the scope of the powers and what they should be. That is why the Bill is before the House.

The next step is to draft regulations. That is a detailed job and necessarily involves a very full discussion between the Government and all those bodies with any interest in pesticide use — manufacturers, users, environmental groups, distributors and so on, all with an informed, valuable and differing contribution to make. That process of discussion must take place before regulations can be prepared. It will begin as soon as the Bill becomes law.

Of course, preparations are already being made, but to argue that the regulations ought to be ready now is to argue that the Bill should wait until everything else is finalised. There is no reason why the enabling legislation should be held up until the subordinate legislation has been drafted. The Government are acting in a logical order.

Hon. Members seem to underrate the statement of intent which was made available to them. I urge them to examine it again. It gives a fair general picture of the matters that will be covered in regulations and, in regard to the need for future consultation, it gives an indication of what will be provided. I assure hon. Members that the Government's consultation document and all the proposals discussed with interested organisations will be made available to them. My right hon. Friends will be more than willing to receive the views of hon. Members while the process of consultation is taking place.

Mr. John: Do I take it from what the hon. Lady says that the only opportunity that we will officially have as a House of Commons to debate the matter will be on take-it-or-leave-it basis when the regulations are printed?

Mrs. Fenner: I shall have to consider carefully the views that have been expressed by the House today. I pledge to do that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true that officials of the Department have submitted to the manufacturers draft regulations?

Mrs. Fenner: So far as I am aware, no. A consultation document will be prepared which will go out to all interested bodies.

Mr. Hardy: If the consultation paper is prepared, can we be sure that it will also be submitted to the Committee, or that it will not be sent out to the manufacturers about two days after the Committee has concluded its deliberations?

Mrs. Fenner: Hon. Members can all have the consultation paper. I know I must not quote directly, but my noble Friend said exactly that:

"The Government intend to issue a consultation paper on the details of the regulations and to get down to drafting the regulations when we have received the responses."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 February 1985; Vol. 459, c. 1052.]

I trust that that answers the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) asked for a definition of an emergency under part I. It is the nature of an emergency that it cannot be defined in advance. Someone must decide whether an emergency has arisen. The Bill puts that responsibility on Ministers and then rightly provides Ministers with the powers necessary to deal with it. To give Ministers flexibility, part I is intentionally not specific about the circumstances in which it would be used. As my hon. Friend the Minister made clear, part I is intended to deal only with major emergencies including those at sea where the help and co-ordinating power of central Government will be needed in addition to the skills and resources of local authorities. Part I in no way detracts from the legal powers that local authorities already possess.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd asked about the distinction under part I between a gross and an ordinary mistake by a Minister in declaring an emergency. Under part I the Minister might—indeed, probably would—take measures which subsequently proved more than were strictly necessary. It is the nature of precautionary measures that they are taken before the full facts can have been established. The courts would assume that a potential polluter could understand that. It is an inevitable consequence of the Bill that a polluter would be responsible for the results of all reasonable precautionary measures.

Mr. John: Including the damage to a soft fruit crop which was lost irretrievably even though there was no pollution?

Mrs. Fenner: The polluter would be liable because of the event that caused the Minister to take that action.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd asked what would happen if the polluter could not be identified. Part I is intended to be used only in emergencies—not to deal with relatively minor incidents. It is extremely unlikely that an emission of dangerous substances sufficient to require the issue of an emergency order would arise without the source becoming apparent. However, if such an incident occurred, those who were affected would not be deprived of benefits under their insurance policies because the person legally liable could not be sued. Financial responsibility should remain where it properly belongs, and the legislation should not encourage it to be transferred elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd asked about the role of local authorities. It is not necessary to refer to local authorities in the Bill, because their existing power under the Food Act 1984 to condemn unfit food will remain exactly as it is. The Bill will enable Ministers to impose safet-first restrictions in a major emergency. Moreover, it is not necessary to protect the ability of local authorities to make representations to Ministers. Any responsible body or person could ask Ministers to use their powers, and Ministers would be bound to consider any reasonable representation.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd was concerned about the repeal of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. That Act gave power to make arrangements with other convention states for mutual enforcement of conventions. It was enacted on an assumption that such arrangements would be elaborated under conventions; in fact, they were not. Enforcement has remained with individual contracting parties, so it

cannot be true that this would have a deterrent effect. In fact, no work has been done in that regard in 10 years. Our approach has been to strengthen the controls that we have —for example, to extend control over foreign vessels.

The hon. Gentleman asked about nuclear dumping. The Government have already broadly accepted the Holliday recommendation. But further work is required, and we are actively pursuing this matter. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, at a meeting which I attended yesterday, made representations to the TUC to examine a follow-up to Holliday. I assure the House that the action recommended by Holliday will be taken.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about waste disposal on the sea bed. That is a new concept for waste disposal whose feasibility and legal position have not yet been fully examined, but the consensus so far in the London dumping convention is that the LDC is the place to discuss it. If it is shown to be feasible and safe, such disposal should not go ahead until a regulated framework has been worked out in the LDC. The international legal position is so unclear that it would be premature to try to deal with that subject in the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman added that the Government should review their policy of reliance on dumping. United Kingdom policy has always been firmly based on a scientific examination of requests for dumping licences in order to protect the marine environment. The Bill contains that principle. Indeed, it strengthens our control where such strengthening has been shown to be necessary. The United Kingdom also places importance on observing the provisions of international conventions, and the Bill gives us power to do that. Subject to that scientific and environmental background, the Government believe that some wastes can safely be disposed of at sea. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) said that the best disposal option should be found. The Holliday report recommended that various options should be reviewed, and that study is being organised. Meanwhile, the Government have said that the dumping of nuclear waste will not resume until the review by the London dumping convention is complete.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised several matters on part II and said that there were many forms of pollution. I agree, but there are many different causes of pollution, which can all have adverse effects on fisheries. The Bill deals with one area — dumping and incineration. Dumping means the deliberate disposal from ships, marine structures and floating containers. The protection of fisheries is a major consideration in licensing. The hon. Gentleman asked about staff shortages for monitoring as evidenced in the Rayner report. I am glad to say that those vacancies have been filled. He asked whether marine structures included oil rigs, and I can confirm that they do. He asked about the abandonment of oil rigs. I agree that that is an important matter, but the problem will not arise for several years. The Bill does not deal specifically with that matter, because it is not how oil rigs will be disposed of. However, it is clear that the fisheries must be safeguarded when that time comes. The hon. Gentleman will agree that his other points can be taken up in Committee.

Pesticides have taken up most of the debate today. Many hon. Members have dealt with this part of the Bill, and I hope that I will not sound perverse for a Government Minister if I say that I welcome the detailed expression of their concern. This part of the Bill is evidence that the Government are also anxious to establish a system under which we can do whatever is proved necessary over time to control the use of pesticides. I do not pretend that we have all the answers now, but I regard the questions that hon. Members have raised today as an essential test of the Bill. Does it provide powers to control matters if some of our worst fears are realised? At the same time, are its objectives clear enough so that it does not arouse fears of unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those who earn their livings in the industries involved? The Government believe that the Bill meets both tests, and they wish to persuade hon. Members of that.

I group some of the concerns that have been expressed by hon. Members by dealing first with the system of approval of pesticides. The Government's decision to build the Advisory Committee for Pesticides into the approval system—to make it clear that the committee controls its agenda and is to be consulted in the preparation of regulations as well as approvals — has been welcomed. But a number of hon. Members have asked either that the ACP should have a wider membership, including representatives of trade unions, environmental groups and so on, or that the Health and Safety Commission, with its tripartite consultative machinery, should play a bigger role in the approval of pesticides.

We do not think that it would be appropriate to change the nature of the ACP by adding interest groups to its membership. However, we propose to review the structure and membership of the specialist panels which assist the ACP and the scientific sub-committee on such things as container design, labelling and wildlife issues, and which must in the future concern themselves with the issue of economy and safety in application systems.

We would welcome an input from representatives, for example, of the trade unions, on these important panels and will consult appropriately when we have a detailed proposal to make.

Many hon. Members have raised the question of exports. I fully appreciate the concern of those who wish to commit the Government to a particular policy on exports in the belief that it is necessary to bring under strict control the export of materials which are either banned or severely restricted in use in the United Kingdom.

We could argue at length about the desirability of such a control, but I put it to the House that the Bill, together with the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939, provides Ministers with all the powers necessary to control the export of pesticides, should they feel that to be desirable and in the interests of industry. It seeks to clarify when those powers would be used, which is in the fulfilment of an obligation entered into internationally with our trading partners. In the Government's view, this strikes the right balance.

Hon. Members raised points about the disclosure of information or our willingness to make publicly available the data which is deposited with Departments as the basis for the safety assessment which leads to approval. It would not be right to give specific commitments at this stage to the detail of the information which the Government will disclose.

But our policy is clear. The Departments which hold this information now are "pollution control authorities" in the terms of the tenth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, and the Government accept the thrust of the commission's overriding recommendation that

[Mrs. Fenner]

"There should be a presumption in favour of unrestricted access for the public."

Several hon. Members raised the question of the development of alternative forms of plant protection. The hon. Member for Pontypridd and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills)—my hon. Friend explained that he might have to leave before the end of the debate—raised that matter, and I will gladly deal with it.

Our concentration in the Bill has been largely on chemical-based systems of control, and that is necessary because that is what we are currently trying to regulate. But the Government are keen to see a high level of activity in the public and private sectors in improving plant varieties and propagation material, including resistant varieties, in developing biological systems of pest control —my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) spoke about that — and in developing integrated control systems with careful monitoring of pest levels to enable the choice of the most effective chemicals and the optimum stage at which to apply them.

At our Boxworth experimental husbandry farm there is a major project to determine the long-term ecological effects of different levels of pesticide inputs in animal and plant species. Similar research to help reduce pesticide usage in the stored crops sector is under way at the ADAS Slough laboratories. This is all part of our policy on pesticides, and part III of the Bill would not make sense without it.

In the last few minutes of the debate I shall try rapidly to take up some of the issues raised by my hon. Friends. Some of them talked about cost and enforcement. We hope that the cost of implementing part I will not be much. The provisions in part I are intended to deal with an emergency which we hope will not happen. The costs incurred in the implementation of part II will be offset by fees for licensing. As for part III, I have informed the House of the intention to appoint 18 additional inspectors for the Health and Safety Executive and 16 extra staff for the Ministry. There will be fees for applications for approval.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that some of us will be happy if there is additional cost provided that there is an effective result? We will not mind a few extra appointments to ensure that the Bill works properly. We shall not object if that price has to be paid.

Mrs. Fenner: Indeed. I felt that I should reassure the House about the nature of the cost.

Several hon. Members have spoken about training. The regulations would require that after a transitional period those wishing to supply and distribute pesticides must satisfy Ministers that they have reached appropriate standards in the suitability of their premises and the training of their staff. Such evidence would be required at regular intervals. Ministers could have regard to eviden from such organisations or centres which could satis them that they had tested to the required standard.

Mr. John Carlisle: In satisfying herself and t Department of the standard of those involved in t scheme, would it not be as well for my hon. Friend to vi the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Tra Association to talk to those involved in the bas agreement? She would find there people who are alrea qualified. They have passed examinations and have gre experience within the industry. They might be of gre assistance to her.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. My hon. Friend advanced th argument earlier and so did my hon. Friend the Memb for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). They spoke the value of BASIS and we hope that there will contin to be voluntary support for the scheme. It is right th consultation with the organisation would be helpful.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbe Savours) referred to a report in the *The Sunday Tim* about high pesticide residues. *The Sunday Tim* publicised a survey that had been conducted by th Association of Public Analysts. The data were wrong interpreted. Residue levels were low and *The Sund Times* did not publish a correcting letter. The extensi monitoring of the Government's working party o pesticide residues demonstrates that residues have falle steadily over the past 20 years as a result of controls.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (M Carlisle) asked about seeds and wanted to know wheth they are covered by the Bill. The answer is yes.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clar referred to Rachel Carson and "Silent Spring". We a rather proud of the voluntary pesticides safety precautio scheme, which predates Rachel Carson. I do not acce from him any criticism of the Government o environmental matters. We do not have all the answe now, but we are seeking to ensure that the Bill enveloped in good, sound environmental arrangements.

Dr. David Clark: The Minister gave us a hint that sh would be prepared, perhaps, to open up the freedom o information provisions. Will she give the House a assurance that her officials will consider carefully th scheme that the United States has produced to tackle th problem?

Mrs. Fenner: I can assure the hon. Gentleman and th hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that we hav already had a cosy talk, to take up the accusation of th hon. Member for South Shields, with the freedom o information campaign. Perhaps that will answer question on that score.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed t a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 4 (Committal of Bills).

Sittings of the House

9.59 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you, like me, are an assiduous reader of *The House Magazine*. In this week's issue, which has appeared since the business was put down last week, we read that so far in this Session 50 per cent. of sitting days have ended after midnight. I believe that it is the first time in living memory that that has happened. I believe that when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House set the business before the House he was probably unaware of the facts——

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The Ten o'clock business motion.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Water (Fluoridation) Bill, the Ways and Means Motion and the Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 75.

Division No. 139] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Crouch, David
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haynes, Frank
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Michie, William
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Nellist, David
Norris, Steven

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Ottaway, Richard
Patchett, Terry
Prescott, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Thornton, Malcolm
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wareing, Robert
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. Peter Bruinvels.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Food and Environment Protection Bill
[Lords] [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(i) of all sums required for the purpose of making payments on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the international organisations mentioned in the Act;

(ii) of any expenses of a Minister of the Crown or government department incurred in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of the receipts of a Minister of the Crown or government department under the Act.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) This is the first time that I have used the opportunity afforded in a money resolution to draw the attention of the House to an important matter in a Bill. The resolution should always be considered at some length so that we know precisely the financial implications involved in the Bill, and should not simply go through on the nod.

The Food and Environment, Protection Bill *[Lords]* is an excellent Bill and I welcome it, having heard my hon. Friends the Minister of State and the Parliamentary Secretary.

However, we should consider the implications of the money resolution, and the House will need to refer to clauses 21, 12 and 17. The money resolution is on the Order Paper in the name of my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I do not think that he is here, so perhaps my hon. Friends representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will listen to what I have to say and will be able to answer some of the questions that I should have wanted to put to the Treasury if there had been a Treasury spokesman here to answer it.

The resolution says:

"That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(i) of all sums required for the purpose of making payments on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the international organisations mentioned in the Act;

(ii) of any expenses of a Minister of the Crown or government department incurred in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of the receipts of a Minister of the Crown or government department under the Act."

Clause 21 of the Bill gives rise to some questions that I wish to pose to the Treasury, if necessary through my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Clause 1(1) states:

"There shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament all sums required for the purpose of making payments on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the international organisations."

On Second Reading, of course, I would not expect my hon. Friends to go into the sort of detail that can be covered when considering a money resolution. However, one has to consider the sort of international organisations to which

the Government in the name of the United Kingdom pay sums of money. For example, it is appropriate to draw a parallel with the problems that the United Kingdom is encountering in regard to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. It has been argued that, because of the rather squalid use of moneys paid to that organisation, the Government may conclude that the annual subscription to UNESCO is unjustifiably high.

I do not know what sort of international organisation might benefit after the enactment of the Food and Environment Protection Bill. Presumably a number of international organisations might hold international conferences at which the Government wished to be represented. Parliament should have some indication from the Treasury or the Ministry of Agriculture of the amount of money involved in sending representatives of the Government to discuss food and environment protection issues at such international conferences.

Might such international conferences be organised by the European Community? Might they involve the Third world? The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) drew attention to the implications of the Bill for the Third world. It is reasonable to assume that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food might wish to send a representative of the Department or a Minister to a conference attended by participants from the Third world to consider the effects of food and environment protection. If such an international conference involved all the countries in the world — that is, not only member countries of the European Community and of the Western world, but possibly member countries of the Warsaw pact, the Soviet Union and Third world countries — where would such a conference be held, how frequently would it take place and would attendance at it benefit this country?

We tend sometimes to be a little glib as a Parliament in authorising the attendance of representatives of Government Departments and Ministers to attend conferences of this nature—although I am sure that they make some contribution to food and environmental protection in the world. On the other hand, there are a number of examples, to which my hon. Friends and Opposition Members may point, of Government representatives attending international conferences at considerable expense under the terms of an Act of Parliament that was passed some years ago. When one is in the process of considering the provisions of an apparently innocuous Bill, one is not always aware of the amount of money that is involved.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Clause 5 refers to the advisory committee and the number of members of that committee who might be eligible for allowances, as determined by Ministers, with the Treasury's consent. Is that not another example of a large sum being expended in the interests of the advisory committee when we have no idea of those sums or of the number of people on the advisory committee?

Mr. Brown: I must be careful, because the money resolution is narrow and I do not wish to be out of order. Clause 21(2) of the Bill covers that matter, which is also referred to in clause 12. I shall discuss that later. At present I am discussing clause 21(1) which was not written into the Bill for the fun of it. The parliamentary draftsmen who have been advising Agriculture Ministers obviously realise that the Bill, if it is to have international relevance — bearing in mind that pesticide control has international repercussions — must recognise that it might be necessary for the British Government to be represented on some kind of international organisation.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sorry to stop my hon. Friend in mid-flow. I do not want to make a long intervention. My hon. Friend talks about United Kingdom representatives on international organisations. Can he put the House out of its misery? If one of those international organisations had something to do with the European Economic Community would the funds be provided by the EEC or would the British taxpayer have to find the money? That might have an effect on how we feel.

Mr. Brown: Clause 21(1) is specific. If the international organisation came under the umbrella of the European Community

"all sums required for the purpose of making payments on behalf of Her Majesty's Government"

would be paid out of money voted by this House. There is no question but that the British taxpayer would pick up the tab. The clause could not be more clearly drafted. There is no question of money being paid by the European Community, indirectly. The Government, under the authority given under clause 21(1), would be able to make whatever payment they were asked to make by an international organisation if that organisation came under the auspices of the European Community.

The clause refers to "the international organisations." That implies that such organisations are already established. Perhaps the Government and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have already been represented on them. I hope that the Minister can explain which international organisations already exist, whether the Government already participate, and in what international organisations, as a result of the Bill, the Government might participate in the future.

It is clear from this that there must be a whole range of no doubt very worthy international organisations already established which probably play a vital role in maintaining the protection throughout the world that this Bill seeks to apply in the United Kingdom. I think it right to use the opportunity afforded by this short debate to find out what sort of costs are involved. We are just two weeks from the Budget.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Could my hon. Friend refer to the excellent brief on this Bill sent out by the National Farmers Union and the section of it that relates to pesticides? With regard to the particular concern about the way this Bill might affect imports into this country it says:

"The Government must ensure that the new system will in no way hinder competition through the international trading of safe products, and must provide the resources to ensure the rapid clearance of safe products imported from abroad."

Bringing my hon. Friend back to the home scene, has he any idea, and has the Minister given any indication, whether the resources to ensure the rapid clearance of safe products imported from abroad are to be provided and if so in what amount?

Mr. Brown: Again, I must be very careful, because it is a very narrow resolution to which we are speaking. There is some relevance in the point made by my hon.

[Mr. Brown]

Friend in that the question of pesticide imports and exports from countries such as the United States, which export pesticides banned in their own country, would be a legitimate subject for an international organisation to consider.

This Bill refers to a considerable extent to imports of pesticides, and a number of Opposition speakers, in particular the hon. Member for Workington, have drawn attention to the fact that some countries produce and manufacture pesticides that they are not able to use because of their own domestic law, but which they export to other countries. Thus the United Kingdom could well be the recipient of such pesticides.

That is entirely legitimate material for an international organisation of the kind referred to in clause 21(1) to consider and I do not think that one should necessarily object to the fact that the Government would want to be represented at meetings of such an organisation.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Assuming we were to be represented at such a conference, can my hon. Friend tell me whether he can discover from the Government whether any substance, whatever its form, in sufficient dilution would be beneficial if added to the water, and in any other concentration would not be?

Mr. Brown: My hon. and learned Friend, as always, puts temptation in the way of all of us. That is the great problem about giving way to him — one never quite knows what is coming. My concern tonight is not what is a dangerous substance in a liquid form. It may well be that my hon. and learned Friend, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we move on to another subject, may speculate on that question.

The crucial point here is that there are dangerous substances—possibly even the substance which my hon. and learned Friend had in mind—referred to in the brief quoted my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), which clearly have international repercussions. Therefore, I accept that it is in order and right and proper for the Ministry of Agriculture to ask Parliament to give some kind of authority for Her Majesty's Government to be represented in such an international forum. That is perfectly legitimate. I do not quarrel at all with the implications behind subsection (1), but the House is entitled, having spent six hours on the Second Reading debate, to have some indication as to the nature of the international organisations, who is represented in those bodies, and the extent to which those bodies represent a continent or countries from all over the world. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friends will take the point that I am raising seriously.

I thought that there would be no reference whatsoever to the financial implications of the Bill, but, in fairness to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, she referred to them in the closing moments of her speech. She said that no financial implications would be involved in part I unless there was an emergency. We must take that statement on trust. Who knows what the scale of an emergency might be, when the Bill might apply? You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in a previous incarnation in the House I represented the constituency known as Brigg and Scunthorpe. In that constituency is a famous village that the whole House will know, called Flixborough. If such a dreadful accident, which occurred in 1974, were to recur, perish the thought, after the reached the statute book, there is no question but th provisions would be effective. The measure migh effective in preventing such an accident, but if it occu it would be possible to deal more adequately with suc event.

An emergency on that scale would incur grave fina consequences under part I, which presumably would to be borne by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Food. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secr referred to an emergency fairly glibly—I do not b her, because one hopes that an emergency of the sor I have described will happen once in a lifetime, if a However, even part I has some financial implicati certainly to any hon. Member who either represente now represents the constituency containing the n name "Flixborough".

The Parliamentary Secretary said that she did foresee any financial implications in part II becaus Government would make certain charges in respe granting licences. She felt that the charges would er that any costs of the Bill in terms of the granting of lice would be borne by the revenue that was so generat come therefore to subsection (2) of clause 21, which i relevant subsection.

Mr. Marlow: Unfortunately, I was unable to be h as so often happens, when the Bill itself was b discussed, because I was in Committee. My hon. Fr has been passing through the subject of licences, an doubt the cost of licences and of administering the wonder whether we know, and whether my hon. Fr can tell the House, what the licence fee is likely to be, whether it will cover the cost of administering the lice Would my hon. Friend prefer the licence to be a revenue raiser, in which case in what fields should revenue be raised, and how much should be raised?

Mr. Brown: That is one of the small weaknesses o Bill. If one wanted to nit-pick, one would say that th a weakness of the Bill. I would not expect there to be such indication, because it is largely an enabling Bi believe that all hon. Members will acknowledge that only right and proper for a Bill of this kind to b enabling piece of legislation. The Government, c rightly, would not expect to set out the kind of quest posed by my hon. Friend until they introduced secon legislation by means of the statutory instruments or Or in Council which are provided for in the Bill. Howe in this debate, it is legitimate to be given a hint by my h Friends about the scale of the licence fees. Since no s hint was given in the speech of my hon. Friend opened the debate or in the speech of my hon. Friend Parliamentary Secretary at the end of the debate on Sec Reading, it is during this debate on the money resolu that matters of the kind that my hon. Friend has ra should be raised with our hon. Friends on the Front Be

Mr. Marlow: The point I am trying to make is whe it is intended that, net of administrative costs, the lice should be revenue-raising or whether they should neutral.

Mr. Brown: If one looks at the financial effects of Bill in the explanatory and financial memorandum, sees that the intention is that the effect should be neu It says:

"Expenditure on licensing of deposits and testing of substances for treating oil spills under Part II and on approval of pesticides under Part III (including the costs of the advisory committee, which will replace a non-statutory body) would be small and would be offset by income from fees."

The implication is that it is not intended to be a revenue raiser, that the expenditure would be entirely offset by the income from fees.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary used the word "small", which is contained in the explanatory and financial memorandum. Many Ministers have come to the Dispatch Box and advised the House that the sums of money that the House was being asked to vote were small. But what is small? A layman would ask, "How long is a piece of string?" In any discussion of the financial implications of a Government measure that the the House is asked to approve, Ministers, whether Conservative or Labour, always say that they will be small. So how small is small? What figure would my hon. Friends insert in place of the word "small"?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am disturbed by even the concept of "small". Another measure may be considered tonight which it is alleged has no financial implications. What are we talking about?

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): The wrong Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: If there is anything I can do to discomfort the idiocy of the Liberals and upset them I shall do so. *[Interruption.]* On a financial resolution, how do we discuss the concept that in one measure it is suggested that there are no financial implications and that in another there is a small financial implication? Who is to be the judge of that mad implication?

Mr. Brown: My hon. and learned Friend has raised an important point. For that reason, when every Second Reading debate takes place, there is usually an opportunity to raise such a question. It is invariably our own fault if we do not take the opportunity afforded by the money resolution to ask the question that has been asked by my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Part I relates to the contamination of food. My hon. Friend referred to the speech of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary. She talked about some "small" cost, to pick up the word used by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). Will my hon. Friend seek to solicit from my hon. Friend the parliamentary Secretary the amount of compensation that might be paid to those who imported perishable foods that were alleged to be contaminated? There may not just be a Flixborough; there could be many smaller incidents of contamination. It would be wrong for a person whose supply of food is alleged to be contaminated but is ultimately found not to be so contaminated to be responsbile for losses that in some cases might well ruin his business.

Mr. Brown: I am conscious of the limited scope of the debate. I have to be careful when responding in detail to the point raised by my hon. Friend. If he were to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he might be able to develop his point and remain with the rules of order.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am raising two serious points.

Mr. Marlow: Get on with it.

Mr. Brown: I am anxious to get on. My hon. Friends are making it difficult. I am used to having difficulties with sedentary and genuine interventions from the Opposition.

Clause 21(2) provides:

"Any expenses of a Minister of the Crown or government department incurred in consequence of the provisions of this Act shall also be paid out of money provided by Parliament."

That is the hat under which we are being asked to vote money for the purposes mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). We should concentrate upon the Bill's provisions and ascertain from my hon. Friends at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what those expenses might be.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary hinted that there would be income from fees. We need to know at what level the fees will be set in secondary legislation. It will be important for those who will be affected by the Bill — manufacturers of pesticides and those who might apply to benefit from the legislation and who would have to pay money to the Ministry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) is trying to ham up this thing. This is a serious debate and there ar some serious points to be made.

The Bill states:

"In determining whether to issue a licence a licensing authority . . . may have regard to such other matters as the authority considers relevant".

The Bill also states:

"Subject to the following provisions of this Part of the Act, a licence is needed—

(*a*)for the deposit of substances or articles in United Kingdom waters".

One of the matters that the authority may consider relevant is the raising of revenue; and, as the Bill is drafted,

"the deposit of substances or articles in United Kingdom waters"

could include the clearing of a ship's bilges.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I do not believe it.

Mr. Marlow: It is very difficult for me if the hon. Gentleman keeps up a running commentary. I am trying to make a short intervention. If the licensing authority wanted to charge a fee for the clearing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to follow the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I cannot do so because of the sedentary interventions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): This is a short debate, and interventions should be brief.

Mr. Marlow: I am trying to make my intervention brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If a licensing authority can charge a fee to clear the bilges of any ship in United Kingdom waters, one must ascertain how that fee is calculated. The Bill states:

"Fees under this section shall be determined on principles settled by the Ministers with the consent of the Treasury and after consultation with organisations".

We have potentially—I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will reassure the House on this point—a vast revenue-raising mechanism without the

[Mr. Marlow]

need for further recourse to the House. The House should be concerned about that aspect. I should be interested to learn what my hon. Friend has to say about that point.

Mr. Brown: I think that I would be out of order if I were to dwell at any length on the implications of clause 8. I think that you would have pulled me up on this point by now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I were wrong. Unfortunately, those implications do not fall within the terms of the money resolution.

Mr. Marlow: They do.

Mr. Brown: I am sure that if I dwelt at length on those implications I would be at the outskirts of order. I am trying to debate a narrow point. The money resolution is concerned with clauses 12 and 21 and, to some extent, clause 17. I must resist the temptation to go down the road of clause 8, which is more a matter for a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: We are obviously not talking about a small sum. We are considering a substantial sum. Are any funds coming from the EC? I should have thought that some funds would come from the EC because, no doubt, we have had to co-operate with the EC on the Bill.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is some way from the subsection with which I am dealing. He has been a little unfair to the Ministry of Agriculture, because I have not at any stage suggested that the expenditure will be vast. The terms of the money resolution hint that the commitment that Parliament is asked to give us is open-ended. It is worth raising that point in this short debate so that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench can reassure us. If millions of pounds were involved, the Ministry would presumably have mentioned that expenditure in the money resolution. The Ministry has committed itself by saying that the expenditure is small. I wish to find out how "small" is small. That is a difficult question.

The question whether money will come from the EEC is outside the scope of the money resolution. We are asked to give parliamentary authority to expenditure to send Government representatives to attend meetings of international organisations. I believe that it is fair that the Government should be given authority by Parliament to send representatives to an EEC gathering. I do not think that we should expect the EEC to make moneys available. I do not like moneys being voted to the EEC and then being spent elsewhere. All moneys spent on behalf of the country should be voted by the House. That is why it is legitimate for the Government to ask for parliamentary authority under British, House of Commons legislation to defray such expenditure as might arise under the Bill, if it becomes an Act.

To return to subsection (2), we are concerned with a small amount of money, most of which the Ministry of Agriculture hopes will be covered by the fee income generated from the granting of licences. It would be helpful to have a hint as to the extent of the licence fee that will have to be paid by those who will be affected by the Bill. Obviously, it will be significant to producers of pesticides. I represent the company now known as Norsk Hydro, which used to be known as Fisons. It is the largest employer of labour in my constituency. It will be greatly affected by the provisions of the Bill. The licence fee will have an effect——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: May I ask for clarificat My hon. Friend has said that he represents that comp Does he mean that he has the honour to represent it in House because it is a company located in his constitue where many of his constituents work, or that he h vested interest and is declaring it to the House, or tha seeks to represent the company as a parliamen consultant?

Mr. Brown: I can assure my hon. Friend on that p I have no pecuniary or financial interest whatsoever i company, nor do I expect to have. Any Membe Parliament who has a company in his constituency 700 employees, as Norsk Hydro has, has an ind financial interest in that company to the extent that if company feels that the expenditure to be incurred u the provisions of the Bill are such that it has cause to a the Government, obviously the work force will take i on the MP at the next general election. To that ext have a personal interest, but my interest is as one represents a large number of chemical factories o south Humber bank. Those companies will have to pa licence fee. If companies are producing pesticides an to take advantage of the provisions of Govern legislation it is right that they should be expected to for the time of the inspectors employed by the Minist Agriculture.

In my constituency there is not only Norsk Hydr SCM Chemicals, which produces titanium dioxide. T is considerable concern about the pollution th generated from the production of that commodity i area — a concern that I do not share because manufacturers produce the chemical in a responsible There will be charges to that company under the provi of the Bill. It will want an indication from me a Member of Parliament when I next go there to discus passage of the Bill as to what those charges will be. I want to know how much the legislation will cost i company.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agricul Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): As my Friend has conceded that this is an excellent Bill, I little puzzled as to why he is labouring the point so r Perhaps in due course he will sit down to enable answer one question to add to the many that he has al answered himself.

Mr. Brown: I apologise to my hon. Friend. forgotten that there was a time limit on this debat I would very much like to hear——

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): W hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I will not. It is probably appropria me, having drawn attention——

Mr. Golding *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I must press on, because time is sho the whole House is waiting to hear what my hon. the Minister wishes to say. I shall not give way, but draw my remarks to a conclusion and ask my hon. the Minister to take seriously the points that I have about the money resolution. I hope that he will tu attention to the points that I have made under subse (1) and (2) of clause 21.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said, my hon. Frien referring to the financial memorandum, has answere

of the questions that he raised. He will be glad to know that the cost of the Bill is modest, which is another reason why I am a little surprised that he has spoken for so long. His first point, which he made a long time ago, related to the subscriptions to the international organisations that are mentioned in clause 21(1). I should make it clear that this subsection makes available money to pay subscriptions to two organisations, or indeed only one. There are two organisations under the Bill—the London convention and the Oslo convention—and the payment is made to the secretariats of those conventions. I am glad to say that both are in London.

Mr. Golding: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: It is not necessary for me to give way, because the hon. Gentleman is achieving his purpose. In practice, we make a specific payment under the Bill only to the Oslo convention, which continues a provision in the Dumping at Sea Act 1974, which the Bill replaces, since subscriptions to the London convention are covered by membership of the international maritime convention, which provides a secretariat and whose subscriptions are covered elsewhere. I hope that that rather involved description will enable my hon. Friend to see that there is very little——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(i) of all sums required for the purpose of making payments on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the international organisations mentioned in the Act;

(ii) of any expenses of a Minister of the Crown or government department incurred in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of the receipts of a Minister of the Crown or government department under the Act.

Water Fluoridation Bill

As amended in the Standing Committee, further considered.

10.57 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I regret not having given you notice of this point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which I think might well be a complex and technical one. Therefore, I shall be as brief as I can. The last time this issue arose—the issue that we have not got on to yet, but which we may be about to debate — was on 26 February. On that occasion, at 11.45 pm, after an hour or so of debate, I sought to raise a point of order. A little while after I got up to raise a point of order, the deputy Patronage Secretary—my hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope) — got up to move, That the Question be now put. There followed from that engagement a series of points of order from myself to the Deputy Speaker who was here at the time. The Deputy Speaker who was here at the time put the Question, That the Question be now put. He did so on the basis that my hon. Friend had risen to his feet before I had risen to my feet to make my point of order.

There was a dialogue between me—wearing a hat, as was appropriate at the time — and the Deputy Speaker——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): He ruled.

Mr. Marlow: He ruled, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, that we should proceed with the Division. Since that time, we have had the opportunity to look at the *Official Report*. As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the *Official Report* has tape recorders and means of deciding these things, and of knowing what is what. In the *Official Report* you will find that I raised my point of order before my hon. Friend got to his feet to move, That the Question be now put.

11 pm

The point of order that I was seeking to make was important because it related to Standing Order No. 31, which is entitled "Closure of Debate" and which says:

"After a question has been proposed a Member rising in his place may claim to move, 'That the question be now put,' and, unless it shall appear to the chair that such motion is an abuse of the House, or an infringement of the rights of the minority".

The point that I was endeavouring to make at the time and which, sadly, was not made, was that although, as we see from the *Official Report*, I made my point of order in time, I was unable in the circumstances to point out that the rights of the minority had been infringed, for we know that, apart from its spokesman, the Liberal party——

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I think that I have understood the substance of the hon. Member's point of order. The matter to which he refers is always within the discretion of the Chair, and the closure always takes precedence. There is no doubt that everything was quite in order.

Mr. Marlow: I appreciate what you are saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I assure you that I am not being awkward. The occupant of the Chair at the time stated that I had got to my feet after my hon. Friend the Member for Northavon, but we have since discovered that that wa so. My point, therefore, is that the decision of the was made without the proper information. In other w the Chair had the wrong information when the dec was made. Had Mr. Deputy Speaker, then in the C heard the point of order that I was seeking to mak might have ruled differently. That is why this is a n of some substance, which we should consider at this

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Either way, the n was within the discretion of the Chair. The ruling was given was quite in order.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Fu to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are de with a matter of voting principle. You may be awar on that occasion there was an alleged Whip——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already rul the point of order raised by the hon. Membe Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). The hon. and le Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is raising a further matter on the same point of order. that the matter was within the discretion of the Chai occupant of which gave his ruling and, as I said, h quite in order.

Mr. Fairbairn: I appreciate the ruling that you given, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am raising a dif matter, one of principle, out of which the objection hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North Marlow) arose. It arose because there was an attem the Government, under the false pretence that ther a free vote, to have a forced closure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. and le Gentleman knows, what the Whips may have deciding is not a matter for the Chair. I have ruled issue. The matter is straightforward and the House s accept the ruling.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a po order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek clarification be one of your responsibilities is to support Back Ben and ensure that their interests are protected in the H We can now speak with hindsight and with the ben the *Official Report* of what occurred on 26 February at column 288 there appears the true record of wha place.

While not seeking in any way to imply that the could not take a particular decision, may I ask you Deputy Speaker, whether it was in order, when ar Member was on his feet—as is clearly established column 288—raising a point of order, for the occ of the Chair not to take that point of order before any business moved by another hon. Member?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentle saying that unless the closure took precedence, poi order could be raised ad infinitum and delay the cl The closure takes precedence. That was the ruling Chair. It is my ruling tonight and I cannot take any f points of order on that matter.

Mr. Marlow: If I could just——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentlem pursuing the matter, I repeat that the closure precedence. If that were not so, points of order co

raised over and over again and delay the proceedings of the House. If the hon. Gentleman is pursuing that issue, he is wasting the time of the House.

Mr. Marlow: I, above all others, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not wish to waste the time of the House. Of course the closure takes precedence. I am saying that Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the time to which I refer, allowed the closure on wrong information because he thought that a point of order had not been raised at that time. As we now know, a point of order had indeed been raised. Had Mr. Deputy Speaker at the time known that that was the case, he may well have made a different decision. You yourself were not here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but your colleague who was may at this stage wish to reconsider the decision that he then made. I think that this is a perfectly proper point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have made it clear to the House what the procedures are. We now come to amendment No. 6.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I rise only——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With amendment No. 6, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 17.

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that I have taken no part in anything which might remotely deflect us from the following important business. I think that in the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) there is an important point of principle for the House, and I ask for your advice. You said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you had exercised your discretion and, of course, your discretion is binding.

In the courts the question of discretion is a matter entirely for judges and will not be reconsidered by the Court of Appeal in a certain category of cases. But the Court of Appeal has ruled that before it can decide whether there has been a proper exercise of discretion by the court there must be an opportunity to consider the facts so that the discretion can be properly exercised. If there is a situation in the House which calls for the exercise of the discretion of Mr. Speaker, must there not be some period in which Mr. Speaker must consider the arguments for and against or give an opportunity for the arguments to be rehearsed? If not, it cannot properly be said that there is an exercise of discretion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I should like to finish my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not wishing to delay the proceedings.

It is important that we should have a ruling on what the position is when an hon. Member—a minority, perhaps—is seeking to raise an issue and the occupant of the Chair, Mr. Speaker or Mr. Deputy Speaker, decides to ignore him and then to say, "As an exercise of my discretion I accept the closure." That seems to be a situation in which Mr. Speaker or Mr. Deputy Speaker cannot give expression to the rights of the minority. If he is so quick off the mark, there is no opportunity for the exercise of discretion. As the courts have had to decide this very issue—whether there is an opportunity for the exercise of dicretion—so Parliament, which is itself a court, and which in many respects mirrors the justice of the courts, should come to some decision for the guidance of minority Back Benchers. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to refer the matter to Mr. Speaker, or to which ever body considers these matters, for future consideration. It seems to be a matter of the utmost importance if we are to safeguard the rights of Back Benchers in this place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have listened very carefully to the hon. and learned Member for Burton(Mr. Lawrence), but I must remind the House that we are not in the courts—we are in the House of Commons. I remind the House of Standing order No. 31, which states that

"unless it shall appear to the chair that such motion"—

that is, a motion "That the question be now put"—

"is an abuse of the rules of the House, or an infringement of the rights of the minority, the question, 'That the question be now put,' shall be put forthwith.

Mr. Deputy Speaker did that, and I have reiterated that decision to the House. I hoe that we can now proceed to discuss amendment No. 6.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course I accept what you have said, but the important phrase is

"unless it shall appear to the chair"

The point of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North is that there must be some opportunity for Mr. Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker to be able to form an impression on the facts, so that it can be said that something "shall appear" to him. Otherwise, all that happens is that an hon. Member rises on a point of order, the closure is moved, and there is no opportunity for anything to "appear" to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. and learned Gentleman of Standing Order No. 31. The occupant of the Chair must make his decision forthwith. He made his decision forthwith, exercising his discretion. I call Mr. Best to move amendment No. 6.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are about to debate some very important clauses. For the benefit of the whole country, it is important that we should realise—and I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would be the first to appreciate it—that there are free votes and free votes. Back Benchers have a free vote, but Ministers have not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me. I call Mr. Best.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before my hon. Friend moves the amendment, would it be appropriate for me to raise a point of order about an article that appeared in *New Scientist* last Thursday entitled "How fluoride might damage your health". The article adduces new evidence not previously available to the Department of Health. Had that article appeared before the Bill was introduced——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that matters relating to the debate that is to take place are not matters for me. I call Mr. Best.

Mr. Brown: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it not be appropriate, before we debate the Bill further, to have a statement of the Government's intention with regard to the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. I cannot ask the Minister to make a statement to the House.

Clause 1

FLUORIDATION OF WATER SUPPLIES AT REQUEST OF HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 1, line 15, leave out from 'force' to end of line 17 and insert 'for one year.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 17, in clause 3, page 3, line 4, at end insert—

'(2A) This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming into force unless before that date its continuance is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Best: We are discussing serious matters. With the greatest respect to the House and to those of my hon. Friends who wish to speak, I must say that I hope that we can retain a sensible level of debate—that the debate will be informative and not necessarily designed to delay the deliberations of the House.

I was accused last Tuesday of filibustering. I found that allegation offensive. It was never my intention to filibuster.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the allegation that filibustering, at any time, can be offensive?

Mr. Best: I shall not rise to that intervention, although I am prepared to be schooled by the hon. Gentleman in matters of filibustering. I gave the House information. The debate ranged over many amendments which needed to be dealt with in full. If hon. Members are good enough to read my speech they will see that I did not repeat myself.

11.15 pm

I like to think that I was acquitted of any charge of filibustering by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, who said on 26 February that all the evidence that I had given had been rejected because it ran "in the teeth of more reputable and more acceptable scientific evidence that goes in the opposite direction." — [*Official Report*, 26 February 1985; Vol. 74, c. 217.]

Inherent in that statement is the suggestion that I had not articulated the other side of the case. As I said to my right hon. and learned Friend at the time, had I done so, I should have delayed the House even longer. That would have been intolerable. Later in the same debate, my right hon. and learned Friend said that I had touched on only some of the arguments raised in various parts of the world about adding fluoride to the water. I did not go into detail, because I did not wish to delay the House unduly.

Amendment No. 6 concerns the duration of an application made under clause 1 and seeks to make it last no more than 12 months. I hope that the Minister accepts the amendment, which does no more than require a health authority to consider the fluoridation of water supplies annually.

There are now 111 amendments to this most unpopular Bill. That demonstrates the opposition to it. I suspect that proceedings tonight will show that this is a matter of individual conscience and that there is no unofficial Whip on those who oppose or want to ameliorate the Bill. I accept that the artificial fluoridation of water supplies in certain circumstances might be beneficial to children's teeth, but if we cannot have individual choice in all matters of health—which I should prefer—we should at least have local decision making.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened carefully, but so far have not recognised that the hon. Member is speaking to the amendment. I hope that he will do so now.

Mr. Best: Inherent in amendment No. 6 is consideration of whether local views should be taken into account. Requiring health authorities to examine the matter every 12 months would enable any change in the views of local people to be taken into account. It is they who will have no choice but to drink fluoridated water.

It is important that I make my position on this matter clear, because if individual choice cannot be manifest in the Bill, at least the collective voice of people should be accepted by the health authority. It would be more able to do that if the matter were to be brought before it every 12 months for renewal or discontinuance.

I have said to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health that if he were able to accept this amendment, although I could not guarantee that I would be successful, I would use my best endeavours with those of my hon. Friends who feel strongly on this matter to persuade them that the amendment should pass without unduly prolonged debate, because it would be a valuable concession. If the amendment were passed, it would ensure that this matter would be debated every 12 months by the health authority.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend has advanced extremely good arguments throughout the whole of the debate. Many of us have grave doubts about the long-term effects of fluoride in the water upon human health. Should not the dismissive attitude taken by the Government to any evidence that has been submitted that does not agree with the evidence that they have led us to believe that they would not show good faith? It is clear that they are not prepared to heed any of the substantial evidence submitted by learned professional people that does not go along with the view of the Department and its advisers.

Mr. Best: Unlike my hon. Friend, I am an eternal optimist, and I am ready to hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will take account of the evidence. I hope that he will be prepared to accept the amendment, because, for the life of me, I cannot see what objection can be advanced against it. It would enable a health authority to look at the matter every 12 months and take into account the expressions of opinion that have been advanced by the local population.

If my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary were able to do that, hon. Members would be able to take the debate on this amendment at a fairly quick pace. I cannot be certain, but it might lead to discussions between my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health and myself and other hon. Members. There might then by a concession by the Government. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that he will introduce his own amendment in the other place to ensure that there will be consultation. It might be conceded that that consultation will be given due cognisance by the health authority and will be acted upon.

I suspect that those who support this amendment, whatever their views on fluoridation might be, will have one thing in common. The essence of the amendment is to ensure the greater ability of the health authority to take into account the views of the local population, who are directly affected by this measure. I have said before, and make no apology for saying again, that I cannot understand

why it is that those who advance the argument in favour of fluoride seem to be so frightened by the idea of leaving it to public decision.

Why must this remain the preserve of the health authority? Why not let there be public debate on the matter and leave the decision to the good sense of the British public? In fact, the amendment does not go that far, but at least it seeks to ensure that the health authority will take that consideration into account.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does my hon. Friend agree that this will be an important declaration of faith on the part of the Department of Health and Social Security, which apparently believes in fluoridation, and it will give an opportunity for those who have doubts — not necessarily the opponents of fluoridation — to reassess and reaffirm their position every year? That surely is the democratic process. From the Department's point of view, it would be giving nothing away. The Department would not be abandoning the idea of fluoridation, but this would give those who have to make the decision time to check any new evidence, such as that which came forward only last week.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend exhibits his usual fairness, as the House has come to expect of him. I agree that this would be a gesture of good faith. However, I reiterate that the amendment does not even seek to give voice to the public feeling. It seeks only to ensure that a health authority will reconsider the matter. That is in no way inimical to the main thrust of the Bill.

I cannot share my hon. Friend's optimism that the Department of Health and Social Security is apparently in favour of the Bill. We know that certain Ministers are not in favour of the Bill. Unless they have changed their minds——

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Best: No, I will not give way. I gave the hon. Gentleman a chance to intervene earlier, when he was engrossed in reading. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I must advance my argument a little further before I allow him to intervene.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Best: I wish to advance my argument and, with due respect to my hon. Friend, he is not doing me any service in attempting to intervene. I am sure that, if he is successful in catching your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he may well give pleasure to the House. In any event, if he is successful, he will be able to advance his own argument.

The amendment is not alien to the main thrust of the Bill, but is an amelioration which would be beneficial by ensuring that health authorities discussed the matter every 12 months. I have advanced one reason why they should do so—that true representation should be given to the voice of the local population, who after all comprise the recipients of fluoride in the water supply without any democratic decision having been taken.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Best: I am coming now to a most important point, and I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to advance it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) referred to a report that appeared in the *New Scientist* of 28 February in the section entitled "Science" under the heading "How fluoride might damage your health". I will not quote the article in full, but I wish to quote the last paragraph which I believe contains the gravamen of the matter:

> "The anti-fluoride MPs and their supporters seem to be a defeated political lobby. Suddenly they have been given proof positive of what fluoride does to the hydrogen bonding of one vital component of the living cell. But are they capable of understanding the weapon they have been handed by Edwards, Poulos and Kraut?".

Those are the three scientists who have advanced these new findings. The article continues:

> "However, all is not lost, for there is one chemist in government who should understand hydrogen bonding and its importance. Let's hope she reads *New Scientist*".

That article was about the hydrogen bonding of enzymes and I do not pretend to understand the subject.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Would it not be more appropriate to discuss these matters under the next group of amendments?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) is straying a little.

11.30 pm

Mr. Best: I am ruled by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) will not seek to delay me.

I mention the article because it might be one reason why health authorities should have to consider the matter every 12 months. I do not necessarily agree with the article's conclusions. Evidence from other sources suggests that such arguments contain an element of scaremongering and I do not wish to be associated with them.

These important matters have not been fully articulated or fully answered by the Minister. In a parliamentary Question on Monday 4 March I asked the Secretary of State for Social Services

> "what study he has made of the findings of Edwards, Pantos and Kraut on the effect of fluoride on hydrogen bonding in cyclochrome-C peroxidase inhibited with fluoride; what are the implications of this research for his assessment of the safety of fluoridating water at 1 part per million ; and if he will make a statement."

I received the following answer:

> "I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible."

On a matter of such importance, the House should have the benefit of the considered view of those on whom the Government can call for expert advice. I hope that, whatever the veracity of the arguments in *New Scientist*, they will be answered by the Minister. I hope that he has taken further advice, because it is important to know the Government's attitude when we decide such matters.

I do not wish to delay the House. I address my remarks only to amendment No. 6. I expect that my hon. Friends will want to discuss amendment No. 17. I notice that the Whip is looking at his watch so, in conclusion, I shall say that the amendment could be accepted by the Government in good faith. It is moved in good faith because it is a genuine attempt to ensure that the opinion of local people is taken into account by the health authorities because they are required to examine the matter every 12 months.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I support the amendment because it will give the House time to reflect on this major issue every 12 months. So far, we have not had a proper chance to consider the issue in relation to the Scottish health boards and the regional water authorities run by the regional councils.

[Sir Hector Monro]

We have been told that the Government will move amendments in another place to clarify the position of the area health boards in relation to the water authorities. The Strathclyde region has an enormous water authority, with a substantial number of area health boards. We must not forget that the reason for this Bill arose in Strathclyde, where a lady brought an action in the courts.

The involvement of the regional authority, the very large number of district councils—which I understood my right hon. Friend to say would also be included in future consultations—and the area health board is a fair recipe for conflict of views on fluoridation of the various water supplies even though they may be under one overall authority. I believe that the advantage of my hon. Friend's amendment is that every year the House of Commons will be able to reassess the position, with the advice of constituents and of many organisations within Scotland, which will give the benefit of their wisdom to the House, the Ministers in the Scottish Office and the Department of Health and Social Security, as to whether an affirmative resolution should be approved.

Everything that my hon. Friend has said tonight is very apposite and very important to Scotland, because it means that we shall have this opportunity to clarify a situation which may be particularly conflicting on account of the multiplicity of local authorities, whether regional or district, and the area health boards, particularly in the area of Strathclyde, but also throughout the rest of Scotland.

Like my hon. Friend, I did not want to delay the House, but I did think that we must make an important point that we have not had an opportunity to make before. I therefore wish to support him very strongly and I believe that, on account of the situation in Scotland, which has never been clarified, the amendment really ought to be accepted.

Sir Dudley Smith: Like my hon. Friends, I have no wish to delay the House on this matter, but I think that in moving this amendment my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has hit upon something of considerable importance. I intervened to make the point that evidence is now coming forward—whether it is correct I do not know—and I was challenged by an hon. Member who said that it was pitiful, or something like that. He may say that, but it comes from *New Scientist*, a reputable publication, not some tabloid newspaper. When I read it, it certainly seems to me as a layman quite impressive and I should like to have the determination of those who are skilled in these sciences as to exactly what the position is.

We have heard something of considerable importance from this article, that there is a woman chemist in the DHSS who apparently is an expert on enzymes of this type and who would be able to give effective evidence to my right hon. and hon. Friends at the DHSS. This surely would be of considerable importance. *[Laughter.]* The Liberals may laugh, but of course they care very little for the rights of individuals when it comes to the point.

The Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): Closet Socialists.

Sir Dudley Smith: Yes. They are closet Socialists. Absolutely.

Mr. Michael Brown: In fact, the lady referred to in the article is not a chemist in the DHSS. She is none other than our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not pursue that. It really is away from the amendment. He should stick to the amendment.

Sir Dudley Smith: I am not bright enough to have noticed that that was what was meant. I was misled by my hon. Friend, and I will get back into order.

It would be a sign of good will if my hon. Friend the Minister were to say that there would be an annual renewal —automatically, or in a short while—for the next five or 10 years on the basis that new evidence comes forward from time to time. Members of the public and hon. Members have their suspicions. Indeed, so do Ministers, but for obvious reasons they cannot respond. If evidence of great importance were to emerge, the matter could be reconsidered. All legislation is not sacrosanct for all time. It may well be that in years to come proof will emerge that fluoridation is harmless or—I shall rue the day—that it is extremely dangerous and must be stopped immediately.

Mr. Fairbairn: Is my hon. Friend talking about the authorities in England and Wales or is he talking also about those in Scotland, where the position is completely different? In that Scotland has a preferable situation, he should not under-estimate the strength of his case.

Sir Dudley Smith: As my hon. and learned Friend knows, I am not competent to speak about Scotland. He can do that extremely well. I am addressing myself to England and Wales, representing, as I do, an English constituency.

My constituents, and certainly others who live in the west midlands, would feel far happier if the Department wer able to make this concession. It is another argument, but they are worried that the water authorities are not directly elected, but appointed. Their bureaucracies have grown up and often the individuals do not reflect the will or the hopes and aspirations of the people. I hope that the Government will do something about the water authorities but at the moment they are there and it is extremely important that we should guard the rights and liberties of our citizens.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does not the problem get worse? If we are to have a discussion on scientific matters which will influence the House in the years to come, such a discussion should take place in the open and water authorities meet behind closed doors, which is a grave matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not pursue that. It is quite a way from the amendment.

Sir Dudley Smith: I shall not pursue it, except to say that I have a great deal of sympathy for the point made.

The Government, in, I hope, deciding that the application will be renewable every year, will give the layman an opportunity to have detailed and important scientific evidence explained to him. The article mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn says:

> "Fluoride switches off the enzyme by attacking its weakest links — the delicately-balanced network of hydrogen bonds surrounding the enzyme's active site."

That is double Dutch to me. I make no bones about it because I am not a scientist.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): It is gobbledegook.

Sir Dudley Smith: The hon. Gentleman cannot run away from it just like that. Just because he does not understand it does not mean that it is nonsense. I am prepared to accept that this is important technical evidence. I do not understand it but it might be vital. Given that kind of circumstance, we have a right to have the matter either disproved or upheld. Who better to do it than Government scientists, on the best possible evidence available to them, and with the best possible assistance from other scientists?

We are not talking about silly, muddled, objectors to fluoridation, who have got hold of some sort of prejudice and do not like the idea of mass medication of water. We have got away from that, and now reputable scientists are raising issues that are beyond our ken. They need to be interpreted. Unless they are, we are failing to do our duty in providing an adequate check on officials and bureaucrats who would railroad the measure through.

11.45 pm

Mr. Fairbairn: If there were no scientists who claimed that there was any harm in the addition of these substances to the water supply, that would be one thing. But in that there is a complete division among the most sophisticated and learned scientists, including two people who have the Nobel prize for their expertise——

Mr. Lawrence: Eight.

Mr. Fairbairn: Eight? Is it not appalling that the Government are willing to put at risk the health of the people on the basis that they will merely disregard half of the opinions of the scientific world?

Sir Dudley Smith: With respect, I do not think that the Government are intending to put the health of the nation at risk, as my hon. and learned Friend suggests. I am sure that they are honourable and decent people who want to do the best that they can. On this issue, unlike many others, they are misguided, but that is why we are here tonight, trying to suggest that one way that they can assist in the controversy is to allow an annual review, which will enable Parliament to reconsider the whole issue.

My hon. and learned Friend raises an important point. It is relevant to the sedentary intervention by the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), who is a doctor. To hear some of the critics of those who oppose fluoridation, one would think that the scientific evidence was not respectable, that it came from loonies, cranks and others, and did not emanate from those who have done serious research. My hon. and learned Friend suggests that some of them are Nobel prizewinners, and I accept what he says. I have always understood that a majority of scientific opinion was in favour of fluoridation, but that there was a respectable minority, a very serious minority, who raised question marks about it. In those circumstances, Parliament would do well to stop for a moment to consider, pause and realise that it should not now enshrine this Bill in legislation without giving some sort of let out, or possibility in future to discuss the matter in the light of emerging scientific evidence.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): The amendment deals with whether there should be an annual review. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, that new evidence may come forward. However, is he saying that the scientists at the Department of Health of Social Security and the Minister in the Department would be so obscurantist, insensitive and blindly determined to drive the measure through that they would not withdraw, at a moment's notice, the power to fluoridate water if they believed that it was dangerous, rather than wait 12 months to do so? That seems to be the implication of what he is saying. Surely they would withdraw that power if they believed that fluoridation was injurious to health.

Sir Dudley Smith: That is a fair point. I am not suggesting that. We all know that if something really important suddenly happened somewhere, the duty of any Government of any political colour would be to the people, and they would withdraw the measure immediately, with emergency legislation. My sense about that is that if there was a sudden alarm and real evidence straight away that it was a highly dangerous substance, and something had to be done about it within 24 hours, that would be done.

On the other hand, I do not believe that this matter will be resolved quickly or easily. Evidence will continue to be produced on both sides, particularly on the side about which we have heard tonight. Eminent scientists have raised very serious technical doubts not only about the efficacy of fluoride but about positive dangers which, if we are not very careful, could lead to malformation. I do not wish to cause alarm. I just want to know what the exact truth is.

As time passes, more and more studies will be made of these aspects. That is why it would be prudent for the House and for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to accept my hon. Friend's very modest amendment. It would give us time to debate the matter in a sensible, logical way at a decent time of the day without any suggestion that we are trying to string matters out. I believe that the Minister would receive a great deal of co-operation from other hon. Members over other aspects relating to the passage of the Bill.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am attracted by the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). It contains the valuable feature that it would cause the health authorities to look at this matter on a regular basis and not to assume that the decision they have made can be set in stone for a long period of time.

Although many hon. Members are hostile to the Bill because they have a general objection to the use of the public water supply as a means of medication and although many hon. Members also object to the Bill because, in England and Wales at least, the authorities that will make the decision to put fluoride in the water will not be democratically elected, nevertheless many people, on wider grounds, would abandon those principles and say that if fluoridation is beneficial and not harmful they will accept the consequent limitations upon individual freedom for the good of children whose teeth may benefit. However, their views could change dramatically if the balance of medical evidence appeared to them to shift very seriously.

One striking feature of the medical debate is that new arguments and new directions of inquiry emerge week by week and month by month. Whenever a debate on the subject takes place in the House, that evidence is brought out into the open. Scientific journals are encouraged to publish articles on the subject and the whole debate is reopened. When these proceedings are over, debate in this

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

House may be at an end for some time. It will be transferred to the health and water authorities, which are not required to hold their proceedings in public and which are not so well known to the public, anyway. Furthermore, if they were not obliged to bring the matter before their members at regular intervals, the authorities would not regularly review current scientific thinking.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the public water supply is a suitable medium into which substances should be put in order that diseases of one kind or another—caries, AIDS, schizophrenia or anything else—may be eradicated?

Mr. Beith: No. The hon. and learned Gentleman has not been listening very carefully. It is precisely because I reject that view that I reject the Bill. In the hon. Gentleman's party, as in mine, though perhaps more clearly in mine, there is to be a free vote on the matter. It is not a party matter. Were it a party matter, the Bill would not have got as far as this, but if the payroll vote were not being dragged through the Lobby with increasing reluctance night after night, the weight of opinion among those hon. Members on the Conservative Benches who have taken an active interest in the matter would have ensured that the Bill was killed off some weeks ago. It is only the application of the party principles of government that have enabled the Bill to survive so far.

I have been tempted to digress. The burden of my argument is that, whereas some of us object to the Bill on wider general principles, many take an attitude to the addition of fluoride to the public water supply which is contingent upon their assessment of the medical evidence. There are many who, unlike me, take the view that, if it is beneficial to a significant number of people, it may be tolerable. I am not advocating that view. I am describing it.

The health authorities owe those people a duty to review the evidence. If they are putting fluoride into the water supply, they should be required reasonably regularly to review the matter. Annually seems a reasonable basis for doing so.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The House will be aware that I served on a regional health authority for 14 years. Regional and district health authorities, or whatever they are called today, are not freely elected. They are nominated by the Secretary of State. What is the point in referring a matter to such a body once a year? We should refer it to Parliament or a Select Committee. I am rather a purist. I have listened tonight to my hon. and learned Friends and others argue the case. I happen not to like state medication. This is a wrecking amendment, but I should like to see the whole thing destroyed and the Bill put aside. To say that fluoride is good and that health authorities should consider the matter every year is nonsense. It is Parliament that should consider it every year.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's unequivocal statement, based on his well-known experience in the Health Service, that the procedure under which our health authorities are nominated by central Government is unacceptable. It is one that led my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) to propose an earlier amendment on that subject. It calls into question all our attempts to have the operation of the procedures under the Bill as reasonable and as fair as possible.

That is called into question by the basis on which health and water authorities are appointed. We constantly have to take what I might call a fallback position. If we start from the assumption that it were better that none of this were done through the public water supply, but the Bill has a Second Reading and seems as though it has some possibility of obtaining a Third Reading, we then have to consider what other ways might be employed to ensure that the matter is decided democratically and fairly and on the basis that information is to hand and that the matter is reconsidered at appropriately regular intervals.

I am at one with the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) in his criticisms of the mechanisms that have been chosen by the Government for that purpose.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the matter is left to health or water authorities, there is no guarantee that either body will be supplied with the full and detailed scientific information necessary to enable them to make a considered and rational judgment? Does he further agree that even if the information is given to those authorities, and although they may act in their almost cowboy-like fashion occasionally, the public cannot evaluate the judgments or query the decisions?

Mr. Beith: All those criticisms can be levelled. Wherever the decision that is reached—in this place or anywhere else—the criticism can always be levelled that insufficient scientific information is available, or that some people took account of one part of the information and some others. We cannot reach a purist view on that point.

The amendment seeks to ensure that the matter is brought regularly before the health authority. For the life of me, I do not understand why the Government should show the slightest hesitation in accepting that principle. It seems relatively simple even for the most dirigiste of the occupants of the Government Front Bench to accept. If they want to apply this collectivist, Socialist approach to the public water supply, let us have the matter reconsidered at suitably regular intervals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): The hon. Gentleman makes comments which continually refer effectively to amendment No. 6. As I understand it, amendment No. 17 is also before the House. It reads:

> "This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming into force unless before that date its continuance is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

I should have thought that that amendment is in line with some of the points that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make.

Mr. Beith: I see great merit—on the basis of arguments that have been advanced by me and other hon. Members who intervened during my speech—in the matters coming back to the House regularly and in requiring an affirmative resolution. If this point were pressed to a Division, I think that I would be inclined to support it. Since the Government plan to entrust these matters to the health authorities, I believe that it is eminently sensible that a regular interval should be imposed within which the Government must reconsider. The strongest argument for doing so is the fluid nature of the medical and scientific arguments that surround this

issue. Many people have felt that if the scientific argument had gone one way rather than another that would have influenced their decision.

12 midnight

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman, like myself, is a human being. *[Interruption.]* I would not say that of all Liberals. As the hon. Gentleman knows, to change one's mind from time to time is part of the human condition. One changes one's mind for various reasons, and the hon. Gentleman has adduced some of those reasons. Letters have been written to many hon. Members about this measure, and hon. Members have said that they are against fluoridation of the water supply. It is possible that hon. Members on the Treasury Bench have said that they are against fluoridation. It appears from the proceedings this evening that they are likely to vote in favour of fluoridation. For some reason—it is not for me to say what the reason might be; they might or might not have good reasons——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): They have not changed their minds; they have only changed their vote.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that they would not change their vote if they had not changed their minds. Let us be charitable about it—Ministers on the Treasury Bench have changed their minds. Having changed their minds once, they may well change their minds again. If hon. Members on the Treasury Bench can change their minds — given their status and intellectual clarity — surely others could change their minds as well.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. I have rested my case in favour of the amendment on the assumption that the medical evidence will continue to engage a great deal of argument from people on both sides of the case. That may lead some people at some stage to change their position on purely medical grounds.

There is no reason why someone should not change his mind on an issue of major principle. The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security — the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten)— has changed his mind once on that issue, and may do so again. The hon. Gentleman is not so inflexible and hidebound that changing his mind once will prevent him from doing so a second time. It is wrong of me to exclude the possibility that some people will change their minds on the fundamental principle involved.

In many ways, that is an argument in favour of amendment No. 17, which would bring the matter regularly back to the House. That would be especially for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman, who might by then be in another job, or perhaps in no job at all. If he has no job, we might see him back in the Lobby voting against the Bill. If we found him on the Back Benches, the hon. Gentleman might change his mind again.

Mr. Best: I have in front of me a list of names of right hon. and hon. Members on the Treasury Bench who, in the past, have expressed opposition to fluoride. In fairness to them, it is open to them—I hope that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) accepts this point—to change their minds. This place is based upon the conception that people will be able to change their minds in the light of persuasive debate. Many of the Government Members whom I have approached have told me that they have changed their minds since expressing unequivocal opposition to fluoridation of the water supplies. One hon. Member whom I approached tonight immediately wrote a letter to that effect to make it clear that he was now in favour of fluoridation, although he had expressed his opposition to it in the past.

Mr. Beith: Clearly, if minds can be changed as quickly and as readily as that, changes the other way are just as possible. I am slightly more worried about those right hon. and hon. Members who have not changed their minds but who feel that it is incumbent upon them to walk through the Lobbies in favour of a Bill of which they disapprove. I acquit the Under-Secretary of that. I think he must have convinced himself of the argument. Time will tell. In a year's time he may be in a different position and have a different view. We must allow for that. We must allow for the ebb and flow of scientific argument. We must ensure that these matters are brought again and again before the authorities. It is an important decision of far-reaching implications. It is not something which can be taken once and for all time.

I fear that the health authorities and water authorities will find it too easy to have an uncomfortable debate about fluoride out of the way and repose in the hope that they do not need to consider the matter again for many years. I do not think they are entitled to the excuse of that freedom. If they are to be given this job, they should be required to review the matter annually. That is why I support the amendment.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am pleased to participate for the first time formally in the proceedings on the Bill. I declare myself as a very strong opponent of the fluoridation of the public water supply. I must commend the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). It is not often that I follow the hon. Gentleman and can say that I agree with every word that he uttered and every sentiment that he expressed. I believe that he was reflecting the widespread opinion that is held in the country about fluoridation. On an issue which is surely one of personal choice relating to what one takes into one's body through water or through food, the opinion of the House should be reflected genuinely in a free vote.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed directed most of his speech to amendment No. 6, which was moved very ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). I commend him on the way that he opened the debate because he held out to the Government a lifeline. The House will be forced to drag the Government through many further hours of debate unless they are prepared to make some reasonable concession to those of us, representative of all parties, who speak on behalf of a great many people outside.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Would my hon. Friend consider it a reasonable concession if the House is not to have a free vote on whether fluoride should be put in the water, for local government, which is freely elected by the public, to make the decision rather than health authorities which are appointed by the Secretary of State, who has also appointed the payroll vote which will vote the Bill through?

Mr. Winterton: I could respond at some length to that intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), a very good neighbour to me in the county of Cheshire.

Mr. Hawkins: Derbyshire.

Mr. Winterton: Derbyshire is making a bid for parts of Cheshire which will be resisted.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend is probably unaware that the water authorities in Scotland are regional, elected authorities. Nevertheless many of us myself included, feel that they ought not to be given the powers in the Bill.

Mr. Winterton: I take the point so clearly made by my hon. Friend. One thing that I have learned in the time I have been in the House—almost 14 years—is not to intervene in matters relating to Scotland unless one knows one's facts. I do not pretend to be an expert on Scottish affairs. I certainly do not pretend to be an expert on the law of Scotland. I leave that to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who has propounded excellent arguments in the debates that we have already had on the Bill. I support both amendments that are being debated, including the one put forward eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, who I understand is a solicitor——

Mr. Best: No, a barrister.

Mr. Winterton: I stand corrected. I can never catch up with the Celts either. My hon. Friend expounded his views clearly. The last time that we debated this matter, my hon. Friend's speech was excellent. At no time did he repeat himself. This evening, he was so reasonable that he caught me by surprise, because I am a little more jaundiced about Government and the assurances that may or may not be given from the Front Bench during the passage of a Bill merely to pacify those who oppose the legislation.

Mr. Fairbairn: If my hon. Friend accepts, as I believe he does, that it is wrong in principle that any member of the public should be compelled to swallow a substance which might do some good to someone else but which is likely to be poisonous to himself, why should that be a matter of democracy? Why should it be debated in Parliament once a year? Why should the local health authority decide it? Surely every citizen and voter is entitled to say, "That shall not come in my water."

Mr. Winterton: To get this matter out of the way once and for all, and to assist my hon. and learned Friend, may I say, reading from a document entitled, "Fluoride: the facts and the fancy", that I entirely agree with the first stated objective of the National Pure Water Association, which is:

> "Fluoridation is not an issue that should be decided by the votes of members of Local Authorities or of members of Parliament. It is the essence of a free society that people can make their own choice on intimate matters affecting their minds and bodies, such as religious belief, medical treatment, and what they should eat or drink."

I should have been out of order had I developed that point, but I hope that I have clarified the position for my hon. and learned Friend.

As has been said by several hon. Members, not least by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, there are occasions when, during the passage of a Bill, the House must find a safety feature that will give some confidence to those of us who are deeply worried about mass medication and about the use of the public water supply for medical purposes. At present, we are debating a fall-back position. With the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, I want the Bill to be defeated. I repeat his view, which is shared by many Conservative Members, that if it was not for the payroll vote coming into the Hous be what I would call the puppets and stooges o misconceived Government measure that is not sufficie understood outside this place, it would be defeated. Wh are the press? They are certainly not here to listen to debate, which is a pity, because the health of many pe is at stake.

Mr. Best: I did not wish to interrupt my hon. Fri in full flow, especially after the expression of concern his water from my hon. and learned Friend the Mem for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I share his conc for his water. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) accepts that I moved amendment very much on the basis that he just state that it was a fall-back position. With him and my hon. learned Friend, I want this to be a matter for individ choice for every citizen who would be affected. Howev the Bill has received its Second Reading. It has b introduced because the fluoridation of water supplies rendered unlawful by the decision in the Strathclyde ca I have offered the Government an olive branch. If Minister now said that the Government would accept amendment on the basis that hon. Members would be b in their speeches to ensure the smooth passage of the B would my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield prepared to cut short his speech?

12.15 am

Mr. Winterton: While I might refuse to accept t proposition, I am sure that it would curtail the deb because many hon. Members would feel that such a fa safe situation would ensure that the rapid changes medicine and science as they affect the fluoridation water would be discussed after 12 months by every hea authority.

Let us remember, however, that members of hea authorities are appointed, not elected. I would rather t whole matter be left to personal choice. People could th use fluoride toothpaste, fluoride tablets or not use fluori at all. Much cheaper and safer alternatives could available for the benefit of children, and they are the on group for whom fluoride can be useful.

I accept that the amendment is a fall-back provisio and if I knew that every member of my local hea authority would, once a year, take account of all ne medical evidence relating to fluoride and the public wa supply, I would be much happier.

We are debating a matter of high principle. Throughc our discussions of this issue my hon. and learned Frie the Member for Perth and Kinross has stressed t importance of that high principle, and I support every wo that he has said. Both Houses should spend some time ea year considering the matter. After all, we are the du elected representatives of the people. The experts a laymen among us can assess the medical and scienti evidence because, as has been pointed out, in this day a age medical and other advances proceed apace.

There should be a free vote on this issue. I hold in n hand a document which the Parliamentary Unde Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, We and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), signed in 1979. That shov that he was then wholeheartedly opposed to t fluoridation of the public water supply. The Scotti Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway a Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), with whom I had the pleasu

of attending school many years ago, was an honorary officer of the Pure Water Association in Scotland, and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will return to the amendment.

Mr. Winterton: I hope that I am talking to both amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appears from new evidence that a number of Members have changed their view merely because of their position and not because of medical evidence that has been presented to them. We are debating amendments of great importance. One amendment seeks merely to make an addition, and the other is designed to modify clause 1——

Mr. Best *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Best: In the interests of the debate and of amity in this place, I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw what he has said about my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. If I am not mistaken, he has been grossly unfair to Ministers and PPSs. Unless he has been able to ascertain their views and to discover whether they have changed their minds because of their position, or genuinely because of being persuaded to the contrary, I ask him to withdraw. If he has not taken the steps that I have described, he has been grossly unfair.

Mr. Winterton: I should like to oblige my hon. Friend, but I am prevented from doing so by the document which I hold in my hand, which was sent to the chairman of the national anti-fluoridation campaign in Thames Ditton, Surrey. It reads:

"I hereby confirm that I am opposed to the fluoridation of public water supplies — name, John Patten — constituency, Oxford—signature, John Patten."

That is dated 12 July——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. the hon. Gentleman knows that the question whether Ministers have changed their minds has nothing to do with the amendment.

Mr. Winterton: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I refer you to amendment No. 17, which states:

"This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming into force unless before that date its continuance is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

We are fortunate to be debating these issues tonight as we are fortunate to have the attendance of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, who represents Oxford, West and Abingdon. I am sure that he will take advantge of the debate to tell the House why has has changed his mind. Perhaps he will tell us that his reason for doing so was not the appointment which led to him holding his present position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with the amendment. The hon. Gentleman must return to the amendment.

Mr. Winterton: I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Michael Brown: Perhaps my hon. Friend will consider what I have to say in the light——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should address the Chair.

Mr. Brown: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will consider why it should be that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who once held the position of Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, and my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Dr. Vaughan), who once held the position of Minister for Health, changed their minds——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is raising matters that are not relevant to the amendment. He must adhere to the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, these amendments provide for a review after a year. The reasons that are being advanced for having that review include the possibility of new evidence and of hon. Members changing their mind. The fact that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security has obviously changed his mind and the fact that others have changed their minds is surely germane to the argument that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is advancing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am always grateful for advice from hon. Members on what is in order, but that is a matter within my discretion. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has been straying from the amendment, and he must return to it.

Mr. Winterton: I accept entirely, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Best: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a convention of the House that before we name hon. Members, whether they be Ministers or Back Benchers, we approach them to tell them of our intention. It may be that those of my hon. Friends who have mentioned Ministers have taken that course, but if not, have they failed to observe a convention of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may be a convention, but it is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for bringing me back to order and enabling me to comment briefly before protecting me from my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn. In general, I do not believe that one has to tell a colleague that one intends to mention his name, especially if he is in the House, as was one of my hon. Friends whom I mentioned this evening. The other hon. Friend whom I mentioned was named for a similar purpose by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross when we debated the Bill a week ago.

Sir Dudley Smith *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I have highlighted the way in which hon. Members and Ministers can change their minds because it is germane to amendment No. 17. If there were a debate in both Houses of Parliament at least once a year, if, in the words of the amendment,

"This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming into force unless before that date its continuance is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament",

it would then be the responsibility of the Ministers to tell the House what had happened in the previous 12 months and perhaps why they themselves had changed their views. Do not their electors have a right to know why they have changed their minds? I will take an even wager, if I may

[Mr. Winterton]

use such a phrase here, that many of the Ministers who have changed their views have not advised their electors accordingly.

Sir Dudley Smith *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend, who represents the town in which I had the great pleasure to be born.

Sir Dudley Smith: My hon. Friend may not be quite so happy when he hears what I have to say. He is talking, quite rightly, about the fact that people change their minds and about why that is germane to the argument. I received in my post this morning a list headed "These MPs started right". It is a list of hon. Members who opposed fluoridation but failed to vote against the Bill on Second Reading. My hon. Friend was among them.

Mr. Winterton: I am delighted that my hon. Friend has drawn that matter to my attention. If he could remind me of the date of the Second Reading, I would be happy privately to tell him—he could release the letter to the press if he wished—where I was on that occasion.

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, whom I had the pleasure of contesting against in my first parliamentary election in 1969 in Newcastle-under-Lyme, but first I say that my record on fluoridation stretches back over many years. I moved resolutions in Warwickshire county council opposing the mass fluoridation of water supplies.

Mr. Golding: May I refresh the hon. Gentleman's memory? He did not lose one election to me; he lost two.

I appeal to hon. Gentlemen not to stir up a hornet's nest by quoting Division records in the Chamber. If Division records are quoted in the Chamber, many of us will tremble whenever we enter it.

As the only Labour Member who had to swing to the left on joining Mr. Callaghan's Government, I warn the hon. Gentleman not to challenge collective responsibility. If he does so, he will cause grave disquiet to each and every Minister, because not one of them can believe in what their leader is doing at present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) pursues that point he will certainly be moving away from the amendment. He should return to the amendment before the House.

Mr. Winterton: I did indeed fight two elections against the hon. Gentleman. They were well contested by both candidates and on the first he produced the lowest majority for Labour in the history of his constituency.

Having established that, may I say that this is a matter of great principle. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) says that I should not question collective responsibility, but this is a free vote. There cannot be collective responsibility. That is why those of us who oppose the Bill because of what it does and the principle of what it tries to do have contested it so strongly. Amendment No. 17 says——

Mr. Fairbairn: It has not been moved yet.

12.30 am

Mr. Winterton: It is being taken with amendment N 6, so I have every right to talk to it.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am amazed by my hon. Friend, ev if he fought such a grand opponent twice, because w he is proposing and supporting is a fudge. I did not thi that it was his nature to fudge. He is suggesting that t is not a principle but that it can be tested. All of the wretched Ministers and their parliamentary priv secretaries will come back in one year's time, be just dishonest and give the vote that keeps their jobs and leav their conscience in the gutter, as all of them are doing no Do not fudge.

Mr. Winterton: I am extremely tempted by some these interventions. I do not want to incur your wrath, M Deputy Speaker, by going beyond the amendments, but it right that, when we are discussing an amendment th enables hon. Members to debate such an important issu a Government Whip—my hon. Friend the Member f Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—should write a letter to Miss Mellor saying:

"This is just to let you know that I have added my name the early-day motion opposing artificial fluoridation of the publ water supply."?

Is my hon. Friend the Member for Watford here? [HON MEMBERS: "Yes."] Where is he? [HON. MEMBERS: "Giv way."]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Orde

Mr. Winterton: I hope that the debates that follow th Goverment's acceptance of amendment No. 17——

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deput Speaker. There has just been a most vicious scurrilou attack on a Whip who was prevented from hearing it b an intervention from behind. Is it not wrong that, when a hon. Member is being attacked in such a scurrilou manner, he cannot hear it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Winterton: I merely said that my hon. Friend th Member for Watford had written a letter saying that he ha signed an early-day motion opposing fluoridation of th public water supply, dated 7 November 1979.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deput Speaker. Would it be in order for you to draw the attentio of my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel Jones) to the fact that he has been subjected to devastating and unfair attack by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point o order.

Mr. Golding: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Winterton: I have had more exercise in the Chamber tonight than I have taken all day because of the number of times that I have had to sit down for points of order and other interventions.

Mr. Golding: I am informed that the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) was stopped from hearing that point of order by the chairman of the Scottish Pure Water Association.

Mr. Winterton: During the two elections that I fought against the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme he

brought forward much entertaining information, and I am grateful to him for drawing the attention of the House to this point.

Mr. Best: I caution my hon. Friend not to go any further in the attack that he is making. I took the precaution of speaking to my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) knows, cannot answer the attack that he has made. My hon. Friend the Member for Watford told me clearly, and I accept and respect the way that he put it, that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been in the Chair for only five minutes, and I have heard nothing yet that relates to the amendments under discussion. Perhaps we can get back to them.

Mr. Winterton: Normally, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford is engaged in concocting press releases concerning my activities abroad.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend the Member for Watford has genuinely changed his mind, and I respect his view on that. It is unfair of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Watford, because he knows only too well that my hon. Friend the Member for Watford is not in a position to answer him.

Mr. Winterton: When I was abroad and my hon. Friend the Member for Watford attacked me, I was not able to reply either. I hope that that deals adequately with the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, whose advocacy of amendment No. 6 I support purely because it is a fail-safe — it is a fall-back position. I support amendment No. 17 for the same reasons. Does not my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn believe that the House is owed an explanation for the extraordinary way that so many hon. Members suddenly changed their minds? Amendment 17, through a genuinely free debate, would give hon. Members, whatever position they hold, a chance to give their reasons for changing their mind.

Mr. Crouch: I am glad that my hon. Friend has come to amendments Nos. 6 and 17. Why are we debating so long on this subject? Has my hon. Friend never heard about the Consolidated Fund Bill, which must come before the House once a year, or the Budget, which must come before the House once a year? As representatives of the people, we decide once a year, every year, on matters that concerns their pockets—taxes. Is it so strange that we should ask them, under amendment No. 17, to consider an effect on their health?

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend, who until recently served with me on the Select Committee on Social Services, a Committee that is directly involved in preventive medicine, has drawn to the attention of the House a very valid point. Indeed, every year we debate the Consolidated Fund Bill, every year we have a Budget and every year we have other set piece debates, and I believe that, on a matter as important as an individual's health, the House also should have the opportunity of debating the issue. That is why I have strongly directed the majority of my remarks to the belief that the Government should accept not only amendment No. 6 but also amendment No. 17.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) would seek to intervene and indicate to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môns and other hon. Members that he is prepared to accept the amendments, I am convinced that a great deal of the heat could be taken out of the debate.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has been attacked for attacking a Whip who is not allowed to defend himself. Will you agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is neither a rule of the House nor a rule of the party that Whips may not defend themselves? In fact, the chairman of the Conservative party at the time of the last general election set the tradition of a speaking Whip.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a point of order, he should do so rather than make an intervention. I rule on points of order, not the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). It is also a rule of the House that speeches must be relevant to the subject under discussion. I hope that the speeches will be relevant to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Hawkins: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was seeking your guidance. Is it a rule of the House that a Whip may not defend himself?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already stated that it is not a rule of the House.

Mr. Winterton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is perfectly clear that I accept any ruling that you have given. At no time have I sought to interpret a point of order, and I hope that I never will, unless I have the honour to occupy the Speaker's chair.

I have endeavoured to indicate clearly to the House my support for both the amendments under consideration. I look forward to the participation of other of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the debate.

In local government, in which I have been involved, the subject was debated by elected members, but it has now been taken away from elected members and comes under the responsibility of health authorities. Health authorities are comprised not of elected members but of members who are appointed by Government. I support the concept of a debate, but the debate in the health authorities should be supported by a debate in this House which is comprised of elected representatives of the people in the country. Hon. Members are therefore perhaps more closely in touch with what their constituents feel about a subject that affects them closely. I fully support the amendments because they provide some safeguard for those who are deeply concerned about the use of the public water supply for mass medication.

Mr. Bermingham: The two amendments under discussion give rise to some hope for the future. No matter how I think of myself, I do not consider myself to be a scientist. I am always prepared to accept the advice that science offers. Indeed, in recent years, scientific views have changed from time to time. As scientific views change—and that is called progress—Parliament ought to be in a position to review statutes.

Whether one is in favour of fluoride or against it, one has to keep an open mind. One has to be prepared to accept change and further advice. Legislation must allow for various matters to be brought into account from time to

[Mr. Bermingham]

time. To do otherwise would be to have a closed and blinkered view which I believe would not be the wish of any hon. Member.

12.45 am

Earlier I was ruled out of order when I intervened. I do not want to pick a quarrel with the Chair, but I was trying to say that just as science has a rolling, progressive and developing view, water and health authorities should have a rolling and progressive view. They should be prepared to take into account developing trends in scientific knowledge.

Someone might make the massive discovery that fluoride is the best thing since sliced bread or that it is the most dangerous thing since alcohol, tobacco, or any of the other products of which I am guilty of indulging in. If the Bill is passed, I should at least like to believe that future discoveries would not be constrained.

An important constitutional issue is involved. I shall try not to try your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened to your comments about some of us going too far and I shall try to keep within the narrow confines of the amendments, but it is fair to say that in the last few years a number of measures have been too constrained. A minor example is the Representation of the People Bill. It took 30 years for us to bring that legislation back before the House. This could be dangerous. Some criminal law statutes are equally difficult to bring back for consideration.

We are dealing with a matter which affects the health and welfare of our citizens. A failsafe mechanism is essential to enable us to review legislation in the light of updated scientific evidence. It could be argued that one year is too short a time. I do not know. I am not a scientist. I am prepared to listen to advice on such matters.

Amendment No. 6 states that the area health authority shall annually review the matter. If I thought that the evidence presented to the area health authorities would be generally available I should be more content. However, experience shows that some health authorities are not as open to the public as they should be.

My views about the water authorities are well known. We learn nothing about them nowadays that they do not want us to know. Amendment No. 6 at least starts us down the road to openness. It enables the health authorities to call for the evidence and, with a bit of luck, the rest of us might find out what it is. Health is too important a subject to be for ever dealt with behind closed doors.

Mr. Best: The Secretary of State has accepted the spirit of an amendment which suggested that the public should be given access to health authority meetings and he gave an undertaking that an amendment to that effect would be moved in another place.

Mr. Bermingham: At least it appears that the Government are waking up to the concept of freedom of information and to opening up some of the unnecessary secret channels in our society. I welcome the fact that health authorities may be opening up, and I hope that this openness will spread to other aspects of Government behaviour. Perhaps if we had a little more openness we should not require quite so many leaks in order to find out what is going on and many of us could give up opening the letters which give those anonymous tip-offs about this, that or the other.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I pursue that muc you will tell me to get back to the point of the Rather than give you an opportunity to do that, I w to amendment No. 6.

Mr. Fairbairn: Watching the hon. Membe flicking around away from the relevance of the wonder whether he would concentrate on this matt were to accept amendment No. 17—which has been moved but comes within this grouping, Mr Speaker—that

"This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming unless before that date its continuance is approved by a of each House of Parliament",

what reason should the hon. Member, or any hon. present in the Chamber, have to imagine that th vote, seduced, suborned, disloyal to its principles trammel through whatever the evidence is?

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a point Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have certainly not been s

Mr. Bermingham: I do not know whether I a to reply to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speake I reply to the hon. and learned Member for P Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), because I certainly did the opportunity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentle deal with the amendment.

Mr. Bermingham: I hear what you say, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. and learned Member for P Kinross had restrained himself a little, he wo found that I would eventually deal with the point sought to raise.

Returning to amendment No. 6, the developme concept of openness in health authorities is one welcome. If I understand the arguments that ha advanced on both sides of the House tonight, there to be a scientific argument—I will pitch it n than that at the moment—which means that th argument for and an argument against. As I hav am no scientist and I am not in a position to evalu arguments, but one listens from time to time to ex one takes on board what they have to say. If that s argument is continuing, it seems to me to be only proper that local health authorites should be unde if this Bill becomes law, to take on board those ar annually and to evaluate them.

There are, of course, a number of health auth the United Kingdom and it may well be that authorities will reach different views on the weig evidence. That is entirely within their right. If o authority decides that the weight of the evidence i fluoride and another decides that it is for fluoride, advise the water authority, under clauses 1 and 2, position and the water authority will then have to necessary steps.

It seems to me to be right and proper that the views of various scientific bodies should be e from time to time. It may well be that with the pa time one particular view becomes overwh accepted as a result of the evidence adduced arguments would then cease. Which view that wil not in a position to judge. But we cannot h continuing dialogue because, as all who have s local authorities over the years are well aware,

decision has been taken where there is no necessity to review it that tends to become part of the tenets, written on stone, of the local authority. It is written in the book, not subject to challenge. Indeed, it becomes difficult to challenge it as time goes by.

It is always worrying that matters pertinent to health should become part of holy writ, written on the tablets, never to be challenged or reviewed. The amendment provides a method whereby the continued review system can be brought into play.

Amendment No. 17 is even more pertinent and important. I concede that local health authorities are no longer democratically elected bodies, which is a matter of much regret to many of us. At least the House of Commons is still a democratically elected body. Even though the health authorities have their annual reviews, that may not allay the fears of those who are worried about the Bill. It is right that this matter, which is clearly of considerable dispute between the various scientific authorities, should periodically come before the House for review.

I do not want to take up the point of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross because the meaning of free votes has been well hammered home tonight. I hope that those responsible for the conduct of the business in this place will appreciate that when a free vote is listed it should be a genuinely free vote, otherwise it makes a mockery of this place. If the payroll vote is whipped in, it becomes necessary for the Opposition to begin whippin in their votes.

Mr. Golding: The Government must still accept collective responsibility for a Government Bill. It is nonsense for people to argue against Ministers voting for a Government Bill. We should be appealing to all the others in the House who are anti-fluoride to be here to vote against people who are bound to vote against them in order to keep their jobs in the Administration, and that is not something for which I would blame them.

Mr. Bermingham: Then there is no purpose in ever having a free vote because the concept of a free vote is that each individual Member has a right——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very interesting, but it is not relevant to the amendment. I hope that we shall not have a discussion about the principle of free or other votes in the House.

Mr. Bermingham: I seek never to trespass, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know the penalties of arguing with your rulings, but I would merely suggest to the Chair, if I may put it that way at this stage, that amendment No. 17 gives rise to the suggestion that the matter should come before the House annually for the positive resolution of both Houses of Parliament. I have always understood that the basis of our constitution is that an hon. Member represents a constituency and that as such he comes here to represent the interests of his constituents. Hence my comments to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) and the House about a free vote. Of course, if I were to be allowed to reply to my hon. Friend's intervention, I would have to raise the question of the free vote. If the Chair is suggesting that in replying to that intervention I shall trespass outside the terms of the debate, I shall naturally accept that ruling, but——

1 am

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am so suggesting, and I hope that the hon. Member will not persist with the words that hung around his "but".

Mr. Bermingham: I did not hear what you said, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: What concerns me about amendment No. 17 is that it provides:

"This Act shall lapse twelve months after coming into force unless before that date its continuance is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

Given the normal time lags in the system, that would be difficult. Given the time lags involved in this Bill, would it not mean that the Government would have to introduce the new Bill the day after this Bill was passed?

Mr. Bermingham: Far be it from me to dare to comment on the Government's ability to manage their own business in this place, but if one reads the amendment literally it means that the positive resolution would have to appear on the Order Paper 364 days after the date of commencement of the Bill. Indeed, that could happen. I could understand an argument from the Minister that a year was not long enough for the Government to consider the matter because of the scientific interest. If he were to say to me personally that there should be a review every two or three years, I would be prepared to listen to arguments advanced along those lines. But it is the principle behind the matter that is important to me. It has been said that we have an annual Budget. The Bill is not quite in the league of the Budget, but it is not far away from the league of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, which has to be renewed annually.

Mr. Fairbairn: Quite right.

Mr. Bermingham: I note that the hon. and learned Gentleman agrees with me. We are beginning to develop the concept of the annual review of matters that are pertinent to people's everyday lives. We all hope that there will come a time when the Prevention of Terrorism Act does not need to be renewed. At the risk of being called to order, I say that some of us argue that that is a criminal, not a political matter, but I shall leave that.

The concept of the whole matter is the annual review. I cannot see how amendment No. 17 can be opposed. If the Bill is to be the will of the House, presupposing that on a "free vote" at the end of all our debates the Bill goes to another place and after that comes back to us—and I wait with almost amused interest to hear what, if any, objections the Minister can have to amendment No. 17——

Mr. Fairbairn: What an extraordinary concept it is that the amendment should not be opposed. I find it most offensive. First, as we see tonight, it will be another year after which the measure will just be forced through. It is nothing to do with a resolution of Parliament. It is a bogus resolution of Parliament. Secondly, this is a matter in which water is to be adulterated contrary to the wishes of the people. It is not a matter of democracy. It is not a matter of 12-month votes. It is not a matter of payroll votes. It should not happen. It is a matter of principle.

Mr. Bermingham: I listen with care to the hon. and learned Gentleman and I accept that there are those who hold the very fierce view that the Bill should never reach

[Mr. Bermingham]

the statute book. One accepts that that premise is held in good faith by hon. Members on both sides of the House. One also accepts that there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who honestly believe that the Bill should reach the statute book. Those hon. Members in the middle who are still trying to evaluate the evidence say that amendment No. 17 is a valuable amendment. It allows the position to be continually reviewed. That does not seem to me to be unreasonable.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, it matters not for the purpose of the argument whether one is for or against fluoride. However, all hon. Members should be in favour of the continuous scientific evaluation of the arguments. In order to enable those arguments materially to affect the Bill, an amendment similar to Amendment No. 17 has to be written into it. It could be argued that the drafting of the amendment is not perfect. I believe that the amendment is very accurate and well drafted and that it is the kind of drafting that should appear in the Bill. It provides both Houses with the opportunity annually to review the position.

If the Minister is not prepared to accept the amendment, it means that he is not prepared to accept the concept of scientific progress — that arguments turn and change from year to year. As evidence develops, so views change. Therefore, I urge the House to accept amendment No. 6, which provides local authorities and health authorities with the opportunity to hold an annual review. I urge the House also to accept amendment No. 17. It would allow the position to be reviewed annually. Because there have been no scientific developments, there may be only a short debate. However, in two or three years a major scientific breakthrough may be made that will need to be fully debated. However, that debate cannot take place unless amendment No. 17 is agreed to. Therefore, I urge the House to accept amendment No. 17.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I should like to say a few words in support of amendment No. 17. By contrast with some of the rollicking things to which I have been listening, what I have to say may seem somewhat prosaic, but I hope that it will not be so insufferably long-winded as some of the stuff to which I have been listening. Although it supported the argument that I propose to advance, it seemed to be in danger of killing it by a surfeit of words.

I support amendment No. 17 purely and simply as a fall-back. Why do we need a fall-back? I just do not understand how so many friends and colleagues of mine whom I have liked and admired for so many years can support, let alone be so determined to drive through this House, a Bill that authorises compulsory medication. It is no use trying to disguise that fact. In opening this debate my hon. Friend the Minister of State said that this is compulsory medication and that he accepted it. Let us think about the implications. If there is any freedom that we should preserve, is it not your freedom, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and mine to say, "I don't want that medicine. I don't want it put down my throat"? That in itself is sufficient of an argument to kill the Bill. I do not understand, as I have already said, how so many of my friends and colleagues, whom I like and admire, can take the opposite view.

Mr. Jessel *rose*——

Sir Ian Percival: No, no, no. I want to ma speech and sit down. I could just understand it if m Friends were saying, "This is so important that w compel it. The House will compel it." At least that be compulsion by the senior elected body in this co But the Government are not doing that. They cou What are they doing? This I do not understand either are saying, "We will not do it, but we will allow tw bodies, over whom no one has any control, to d regret the fact that some of my hon. Friends and coll have suggested that either is an elected body. They and it is nonsense for us to say that they are. They answerable to any electorate.

Mr. Fairbairn: Except in Scotland.

Sir Ian Percival: All right, Scotland is on its can fight its own battles. I am fighting the English —the battles of my constituents and battles in believe.

Mr. Fairbairn: Believe in the United Kingdo

Sir Ian Percival: Will my hon. and learned leave me alone to make my speech? The matte serious for the kind of rollicking enjoyment that having in the House.

I do not understand how my right hon. and hon. can say, "Not only will we go along with the prin compulsory medication, but we will put it in the h bodies over which there is no control." I have not y any explanation as to how they can reconcile that Conservative principles.

I could just understand those matters if the fluoride were overwhelming, but it is not. T Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) wags his h can make his speech in due course. It is no good sitting, as he is, wagging his head. I have taken th to study a great deal of the evidence. I have spen my life studying evidence and trying to evalu accept at once that I am capable of being wron reckon that I can see when the evidence is all on is not all one way in this case.

I wish that the hon. Member for East Kilbrid stop wagging his head. If he has any evidenc contrary perhaps he will make a speech. I do fluoride for myself, but I accept that if someone it I have no right to say that they are wrong to fear that I may have my hon. Friend the Minister's att this. May I have the Minister's attention? None o any right to say that those who fear taking flu silly, and that they should not fear it. We have n force it down their throats.

There are two other matters that I do not like like—this may be a bit stuffy—the lighthearte which this matter has been treated on some occ the Government and on others by those who are p same argument as I am. It is a serious argumen sooner everyone sits down and takes the matter the better.

I do not like this new concept of a free vote. secret of that. I have communicated it to my hon and colleagues. I hope that it will be made cl country that this is not a free vote in the sense the will of Parliament. If the Bill goes through, I no one will say that it was the will of Parliamen vote, because that is not so. I do not believe

colleagues on the Treasury Bench wish that impression to be spread abroad. I hope that they will make it clear that it is not that kind of free vote. If this measure goes through it will be the Government's responsibility

I do not understand how the Government can take the view that it is right to allow compulsory medication or how, if they take that view, they can pass the authority for that to someone else instead of taking the responsibility themselves. That is especially hard to understand because the evidence is far from one-sided. It justifies the fears of some people.

1.15 am

For those reasons, I wish with all my heart that the Bill will fail. I hope that my colleagues will change their minds and withdraw the Bill, saying that they have listened to the serious arguments—there is no loss of face in that. I hope that they will agree at, on reflection—never mind the rollicking — it would not be right to force the legislation through. That would be greatly to their credit. If they will not, I beg them at least to allow this fall-back provision to be introducted. For those reasons, I support amendment No. 17.

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): We have all enjoyed the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), who speaks with great authority on these matters. He did not name any hon. Member in particular who gave the impression that we have treated lightly a matter of high principle. This is our third late-night sitting on the Bill, and levity has crept into the debate without any serious intention to devalue this high principle. We should take the right hon. and learned Gentleman's rebuke on board. We shall do more justice to views on the Bill if we treat it is seriously as the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants.

Amendment No. 17, which is a fall-back provision, is seen by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) as giving credence to a thoroughly bad Bill which devalues the concept of freedom as all hon. Members understand it. I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman wants to deal with the Bill as a matter of high princople. He believes that we should not touch this legislation with a barge pole and should not table amendments that make bad principle slightly better. He says, "There are sound reasons why we can introduce this measure, obnoxious as many of us consider it to be. It is dangerous if we dress the legislation up with all kinds of bad amendments which allow the continuation of the bad principle, but for only 12 months."

We have to deal with the world as it is and recognise that the Bill was given a Second Reading. I shall not labour the point that the free vote is not enshrined in the amendment. It is essential to understand that the free vote as such has never existed. We have had a vote that has not reflected the will of the House. If it had done so, the Bill would not have received a Second Reading. The Bill has had its Second Reading and four sittings in Committee. We are now trying to do our best to lessen its impact. To that extent we have to address our minds to the principle of freedom which we all uphold. The Bill has gone through Second Reading and Committee stage. We are now seeing what we can do to lessen its impact.

Sir Dudley Smith: As the hon. Gentleman says, the Bill has gone through Second Reading and Committee and there have been long sittings on it. As time has gone on, so the arguments against the measure have become more and more conclusive. That powerful speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), a former Solicitor-General, blew the Bill right out of the water. He was arguing that it was a fall-back position but that from his long experience as an advocate he had come to the conclusion that there was a great deal of evidence against the proposal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have passed Second Reading, as the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) said. I hope that he will turn his attention to the amendment that is before the House.

Mr. McGuire: I will, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened with great interest to the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Southport, who never once strayed out of order. The Chair could relax, knowing that he would not have to intervene. The contribution of the right hon. and learned Gentleman on Second Reading was equally powerful.

In regard to the fall-back position, my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) developed his proposition skilfully. We are all entitled to our own point of view. The medical evidence is not all on one side. Even learned men who make their living out of evaluating evidence say that people can be left in confusion. Certainly there is evidence that fluoridation is good and will achieve a certain object, even though some people will not benefit from it, but there is also a lot of evidence that it is bad.

The purpose of amendment No. 17 is to provide for a fall-back position so that as the medical evidence becomes more positive and proves, as I believe, that fluoridation is not good, the Minister who is responsible can say, "Mea culpa. We have made a mistake. There is enough evidence to suggest that the amendment we made to the Bill was wonderful. The evidence against fluoridation is so overwhelming that the Act will not continue."

Mr. Fairbairn: This is a most serious matter of principle. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) was right. It is not a matter which should be discussed flippantly, as the Minister did frequently. If we were to put in the Bill a concept such as is embodied in amendment No. 17, and if the Government, in the face of all the scientific evidence which demonstrates that this is dangerous to health, were to say, "We do not care; our officials have driven us through the ox wagon," what reason have we to imagine that in one, two or 10 years' time any Government would not do so again?

Mr. McGuire: The hon. and learned Gentleman has outlined that point several times. I wish to deal with it practically. My views are well known—I have said that I would not touch the Bill with a barge pole. However, what has made it more difficult for the anti-fluoridation lobby, of which I am a member, is that the evidence points conclusively to the pro-fluoridation argument—in other words, that it is a good thing.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Yes, quite right.

Mr. McGuire: As I said earlier, we are entitled to our opinions. What we must do is to argue and fight our case. That is why we have a debating chamber. That is why we do not have a rostrum, such as exists in some countries,

[Mr. McGuire]

where a man harangues the audience for 10 or 15 minutes, while the others are filling in their pools coupons or writing letters——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Can we get back to amendments Nos. 6 and 17?

Mr. McGuire: I thought that I had not strayed one inch. What I was saying——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The procedures in other legislative assemblies have nothing to do with the amendments that we are discussing.

Mr. McGuire: Only in this sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We must defend our arguments here. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) says that the arguments are overwhelmingly one way. I want to say why I do not believe that that is so. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the *New Scientist* of 28 February 1985.

Dr. M. S. Miller: We have heard this. It has been mentioned by several hon. Members.

Mr. McGuire: It may have been mentioned by others, but it has not been mentioned by me. I have the floor now. The argument about the fall-back position is relevant, because as more evidence becomes available which is contrary to the view held by my hon. Friends their firmness in upholding the fluoridation argument would be weakened. I do not believe that they are saying, "Nothing will shift our opinion. This is the most marvellous invention since one-way streets." What I am saying is that evidence is coming forward to aid people like me, and I am delighted to receive it.

As the article says:

"The anti-fluoride MPs and their supporters seem to be a defeated political lobby. Suddenly they have been given proof positive of what fluoride does to the hydrogen bonding of one vital component of a living cell."

Such evidence was not previously available to us. The more such evidence is available to us, the more the Government's mind is bound to be concentrated. Perhaps we shall eventually persuade them that it is not good to have embarked on the scheme and that, having embarked on it, they must now stop it.

Dr. Miller: Will my hon. Friend explain what he means by the hydrogen bonding of the living cell?

Mr. McGuire: So as not to delay my hon. Friend, I shall refer him to the article——

Dr. Miller: I have read it.

Mr. McGuire: In that case, my hon. Friend understands it.

Dr. Miller: I want my hon. Friend to tell the House about it.

Mr. McGuire: The evidence states that this mechanism destroys certain cells in the body.

Dr. Miller: No; it destroys enzymes.

Mr. McGuire: As I understand it, they are a vital part of the make-up of any human being. If something that we did not know about previously attacks the enzymes, we must say that it is not a good thing.

1.30 am

From the English point of view—I do not want to arouse the ire of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross—unelected bodies will determine this issue. It is almost an obscenity of the Bill that this House, on a supposedly free vote, will not be taking the final decision. The Government are prepared to hand the decision to unelected bodies whose members are not subject to recall.

It is time for the Government to have another change of mind. I say that because the Parliamentary Under-Secretary changed his mind on this issue. We discussed that at length in Committee and, in reminding him of that change of mind, I am not making a party point. Indeed, in Committee I quoted in his defence the words of Emerson:

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds".

Having changed their mind on this issue, the Government intend nevertheless to leave the final decision to an unelected body over which we have no control and which is not subject to the democratic procedures to which we in Parliament are subject.

While I agree that we should not try to dress up a bad principle with frills, at least the amendment would give some hope for the future. As new evidence comes forward —I have quoted some from the *New Scientist*—a fall-back provision will be necessary. Amendment No. 17 would provide such a provision.

Mr. Jessel: I oppose amendments Nos. 6 and 17. The period of one year is so basic to our everyday thinking that we hardly every pause to consider what it really is. As an interval of time, 12 months has no relevance to any problem connected with fluoridation or dental health.

An analogy has been drawn with the annual budget and the annual Consolidated Fund Bill. A year as a time interval has been traditionally used for the assessment of tax. A winter and a summer—a cycle of seasons—was used to assess the income of farmers and peasants, and that got carried forward into our modern industrial economy; but, as I say, it has nothing to do with fluoridation and dental health.

To assess the effects of fluoridation in terms of a reduction in dental decay among children requires a period such as five, six or seven years. Over that type of interval one can see the massive reduction in pain, suffering and the avoidance of waste through dental decay that fluoridation is intended to bring about but which had hardly been mentioned tonight. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) said that 12 months would be suitable to assess what he called mass medication. I wish that some of my colleagues would be consistent and oppose the addition of chlorine to our water if they are opposed to mass medication and ask that that addition be examined every 12 months. That is mass medication, and to be consistent my colleagues should ask for chlorine to be removed from our water or keep quiet about mass medication.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am delighted that my hon. Friend has allowed me to intervene. He does not understand the argument even now. I do not suppose that he will understand it, even in his time scale of seven years. If we add something to our water to make it possible for everyone to drink it without risk, that is not medication. The addition is making it drinkable, or potable. On the other hand, if we add something to our water which may help someone else who does not brush his teeth not to have

toothache, that is not mass medication, that is force-feeding some so that someone else might benefit. If my hon. Friend cannot see the difference between having water that is drinkable for everyone and adding something that may make the water beneficial to someone, he should sit down within the next seven years.

Mr. Jessel: I listened to my hon. and learned Friend's argument, but he was engaging in hair splitting. Both additions amount to compulsory mass medication. There are mass additions because everyone has them in his or her water and they are compulsory because they are added to the water supply which everyone has to use. Chlorine and fluoride are both medications because they prevent disease and pain. In that sense they are identical. There is no difference in principle and to pretend that there is to introduce a hair-splitting distinction which is not worthy of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn).

Mr. Neil Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Jessel: No, I shall not give way. The other night my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross called me and a few of my colleagues cannibals. I remind him that cannibals need strong teeth, which is exactly what the Bill is intended to produce.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is obviously unaware that in some parts of Scotland, certainly in the part in which I live, we do not add chlorine to our water. We have pure water which passes through filter beds. We object strongly to anyone doing anything to our water.

It is all very well for us to talk about mass medication and what we want to do to help the public. It is important for us to remember that in a democracy we should have the maximum amount of freedom. We should impinge on freedom only when it is essential to do so. It may be essential in some circumstances to add something to the water to make it fit for drinking. If my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham does not understand that fine difference, I suggest that he spend some time in Africa. If he takes up my suggestion, he will learn quickly what the difference means.

I oppose the amendments because I think that they are wrong in the context of the water supply in my constituency and not because I think that it is wrong to have a fall-back position. I do not want a fall-back position in my constituency or a review procedure after 12 months. Much as I think that the amendments have something to commend them, I consider them to be tantalising and tempting. They would take us away from the important matter, which is whether medication should be given to the public through our water supplies.

I have no facts to support what I am about to say, but I have been advised today by some of my constituents, who care deeply about this issue, who are beekeepers. They tell me that if chlorinated water is added to bee syrup——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we are debating whether health authorities should be required to review applications at the end of 12 months. The amendment has nothing to do with bees.

Mr. Walker: Amendment No. 17 seeks a review after 12 months have passed following the Bill's enactment. I do not want to have to go to my beekeepers in 12 months' time and say that the House of Commons is going to review the matter and that we are sorry that all the bees are dead. That is relevant to the amendment.

Mr. Golding: Would it not be more important to be able to say "halt" to the Government in 12 months' time if the bees had grown steadily worse but were not yet dead? It would be no use saying "halt" when the bees were dead. The hon. Gentleman wishes to be able to save the bees in the nick of time.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that the House will appreciate the merit of that intervention.

I am not a scientist and cannot evaluate the evidence presented to me. That is why I am opposed to giving even a 12-month period. I remember the case of high alumina cement. In that case there was no 12-month review period. There was no review period at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had bees and now we are having cement. We must address ourselves to the amendments.

Mr. Walker: I feel that you are being a little unjust to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]* I do not challenge your judgment in any way, but I hope that we shall never in the future look at medical or scientific evidence and be satisfied that there may be a review in 12 months' time when evidence is already being presented that shows that we are indulging in a dangerous practice. I mentioned high alumina cement because that was what happened at that time. Before the first structures collapsed there was ample evidence that the substance was faulty. The principal of Dundee university was responsible for writing the papers that showed that the material was faulty and should not be used.

Mr. Golding: Is it not possible that it was the fluoride in the water used to mix the cement that produced the problem?

Mr. Walker: I am not a scientist and cannot comment. However, having been an aviator, I understand that fresh evidence constantly comes forward that makes one revise attitudes that one has held for years. If one does not revise one's attitudes, one can find oneself in serious trouble.

It is unnecessary to encourage mass medication, and it is wrong to force it upon my constituency, which probably has the purest water——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had the Second Reading. We have dealt with that. We are now dealing with specific amendments. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will either address himself to them or resume his seat.

Mr. Walker: I was about to say that if the people living in my constituency are forced to receive this medication for 12 months before there is a review——

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend should understand that in his constituency and mine, where the water comes from the same source, there is no question of mass medication. The people who will have to drink the filthy stuff are not being medicated. They are being poisoned——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman has heard me several times ask hon. Members to address themselves to the amendment. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will either do so or not seek to intervene.

Mr. Walker: I am trying desperately to make you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House understand that I speak tonight on a free vote on behalf of my constituents——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The question whether any hon. Gentleman has received any advice, guidance or direction about how to vote is not a matter for the Chair. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will either address himself to the amendment or resume his seat.

Mr. Walker: It has not been my intention to delay the House. I have spoken for seven minutes, during which I have said why I am not prepared to support either of these amendments. I have sat through many longer speeches that have gone much further from the subject under discussion. I hope that I have explained why I am unable to support the amendments.

Mr. Marlow: I do not know how much of the debate my hon. Friend has heard. He has been here all evening, but I am not sure whether he was here on previous occasions.

Mr. Walker: I was abroad.

1.45 am

Mr. Marlow: That is quite reasonable and I am not criticising my hon. Friend. I would not dream of it or dare to.

Mr. Home Robertson: I would.

Mr. Marlow: Well, the hon. Gentleman is a little uncouth. I shall not be drawn in that direction. My hon. Friend must be aware that every day, week, month and year there is new evidence on this subject. Without these amendments, we shall allow health authorities to pollute our water supply without end. As new evidence is constantly emerging, it is only prudent to pass the amendments.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend as put his case well and cogently. I said that I found it tempting to go for the fall back. I have examined the evidence and circumstances in my constituency and I am unable to support a fall back.

Mr. Michael Brown: The amendments are important as they give those who are convinced that the evidence favours fluoridation the chance to vote in favour of their principles today and to be able to say honourably in 12 months that, although they were convinced that fluoridation was right on 5 March 1985, they recognise——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The time might come when the Government might feel that they might wish to put it to you that the Question should be put. Before that crosses the Government's mind, can I put it to you that we have had a long debate but have not heard from my hon. Friend the Minister?

Amendment No. 6 concerns an annual review, and we know that my hon. Friend the Minister has had a change of mind. It would be inappropriate for the Government to put it to you that the Question be put in advance of my hon. Friend answering the debate and giving his point of view, as that is germane to how many hon. Members might react.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot rule on hypotheses. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Brown: Those hon. Members who follow the view of my hon. Friend the Minister that fluoride is, with all the evidence that is available today, something that should be put in the water supply should support the amendment. They do not know, any more than I do, what evidence will be adduced in the next two months, the next 12 months or the next 10 years, which might suggest that fluoride in the public water supply is dangerous.

Mr. Fairbairn: Let us suppose that it is discovered tomorrow by scientists that fluoride causes cancer or destroys kidneys, or whatever. Obviously, the Government would say, "Stop." However, if in a year's time, there is still the shady evidence, of which there is a massive amount now, will it happen on 5 March 1986 that the Act will fall and the payroll vote is not wheeled in? If so, what would be the Government's position? It is an absurd amendment. Why do not the Government just accept the fact that there is major scientific evidence that shows that fluoridation is harmful and is contrary to principle? To put it on as a sort of annual event like the Budget is ridiculous.

Mr. Brown: I do not agree with my hon. and learned Friend on that point. These are a modest two amendments that enable those of my hon. Friends who today believe that fluoride is a good thing, to change their minds in 12 months' time in the light of new evidence. For that reason, many of us have supported my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) in their amendments. Because of those amendments, my hon. Friends, led by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, can hold their heads high. As there is doubt, which has been drawn to the attention of the House, it is right to give the House the opportunity to think again every 12 months.

The position for many hon. Members, myself included, has changed since we last debated this matter a week ago. Then, I could not imagine that I would read a distinguished article in the *New Scientist* of 28 February entitled "How fluoride might damage your health". I am sure that there are hon. Members who, a week ago, were prepared to give my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary the benefit of the doubt, but as a result of this article, have changed their minds. We would be ill servants of our constituencies if, having debated a matter of great controversy such as this with open minds, we had not been influenced by this article.

Many hon. Members must be taking advantage of what has been described as a free vote not to be here. It may be that last week, hon. Members who had no interest one way or the other in the debate on fluoride were prepared to be guided by the advice being given to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend in the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has just said that there is to be a free vote. I shall not upset you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by talking about the payroll vote. However, there are hon. Friends here tonight to sustain the Government who do not necessarily believe in the Bill but who are here because pressure and persuasion has been put upon them. They are not of the payroll vote, so this is not even a free vote to the extent that my hon. Friend thinks that it is.

Mr. Brown: It would be wrong of me to comment at great length on my hon. Friend's point, and I might incur

your wrath, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I did so. There is no doubt that there are a number of my hon. Friends here tonight who were not here last week, for understandable reasons. They took the view that they did not know enough about the issue, and were satisfied with the assurances that they had received from my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend at the Department of Health and Social Security, and were prepared to abstain and not attend the debate. They felt that Ministers, with all the back-up that they get from their Department, are people in whom they should trust, and of whom they should take notice. But on Wednesday 28 February those hon. Members, some of whom may well be present tonight, read the article which begins:

"New evidence now supports earlier suspicions".

If that can occur in only six or seven days during the passage of the Bill, I am convinced that in the course of the next 12 months there will be even more new evidence. I hope that the Department of Health and Social Security will spend some time in getting its research chemists and staff to consider this evidence. The Department may want to take the opportunity provided by the *New Scientist* article to use the year of grace that would be given to it by acceptance of the amendment. The Department might consider the article and then go back to the test tube, the drawing board or the laboratory and think again.

Mr. Golding: I obtained the article from the Library before supper, and trying to understand it ruined my supper. Could the hon. Gentleman explain what it says?

Mr. Brown: It is incumbent upon all hon. Members in considering whether circumstances might change in 12 months' time to have regard to the article.

The new evidence is:

"The anti-fluoride lobby has always lacked solid evidence of the mechanism by which fluoride could be harmful."

Judging by what American chemists have discovered in the course of the last few months, they will discover a great deal more in the course of the next 12 months. That is why I think that we should keep the debate to some extent open-ended and allow ourselves a let-out, whether we are in favour of or against fluoride.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he does not set too much store by that argument which seems to be the cornerstone of his speech. It may be that he will have egg on his face if he maintains that that is the most important aspect of the matter. I merely warn the hon. Gentleman of that possibility.

Mr. Brown: I accept the comment of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller). My hon. Friend the Minister said last week that he would not take notice of any old report, article or information that came before him. I think that he has a duty to consider any new evidence, article or information from whatever source it comes.

Mr. Golding: I had egg on my face when I read the article, but I ask the hon. Gentleman again to tell us precisely what the article says.

Mr. Brown: The import of the article is that it has been discovered recently that fluoride damages the enzymes which are crucial to the human body function. Fluoride switches off the enzymes. I am not a scientist. The House is being asked to debate a matter. We are lay people, but I do not think that it devalues our arguments in any way if we adduce certain scientific evidence. I think that it is perfectly reasonable for us to do this.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The study to which my hon. Friend refers describes for the first time

". . . the crystal structure of a fluoride-inhibited peroxidase enzyme . . . the fluoride ion attaches itself to the iron atom at the heart of the enzyme and then disrupts the active site by attracting groups that can form strong hydrogen bonds to itself".

2 am

Mr. Brown: The yeast enzyme is affected by the ingestion of fluoride over a considerable time. I shall explain what the yeast enzyme does——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should like the hon. Gentleman to address his comments to the amendment rather than to the article on medical matters which are beyond my comprehension, and—I think—beyond that of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not possible that within the 12 months the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will have read and understood the arguments and be in a position to argue on behalf of the Government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House accepts amendment No. 17, we shall be able to return to the argument 12 months from now.

Mr. Brown: In an intervention last week I drew the attention of the House to an article in *New Scientist* in 1983. I have read that publication regularly for about three years. I collect all the articles on fluoride in that distinguished magazine. It is clear that *New Scientist* has taken an editorial view that fluoride should be examined carefully. I do not pretend to understand the scientific analysis in this or any other article, but it is important in the next 12 months to consider new evidence.

Mr. Fairbairn: The refusal even to consider the scientific arguments demonstrates that the Government are saying, through their officials, that they do not care what the evidence is and that they propose to ignore it.

Mr. Brown: I agree. I am prepared to leave the article and refer to the publication of the report on fluoridation by the Royal College of Physicians.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend should not be so willing to discard the importance of the article in the face of the baseless challenge from the Opposition that there is no evidence for challenging the veracity of that article. My understanding of the importance of the article is that since fluoride affects the hydrogen bonding——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be in order to discuss the relevance of the article to the amendment, but it is not in order to seek to widen that to a discussion about the basis of the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should not rise when the Chair is addressing the House. We cannot discuss matters which have been decided on Second Reading.

Mr. Lawrence: I am sorry that I expressed my argument so ineptly that I misunderstood. The significance of the article, and therefore the significance of the point of being able to consider the scientific evidence more frequently than the Bill allows, is that fluoride interferes with hydrogen bonding in the yeast enzyme. It is first-time

[Mr. Lawrence]

evidence that fluoride can interfere with a living organism in a living cell in the body. It is a significant breakthrough. Since it is a recent breakthrough, amendment No. 17 is important and valuable for the safety of our people.

Mr. Brown: I shall not dwell—it would be out of order to do so—on the technical reasons which have been adduced in this article entitled "How fluoride might damage your health". But I think that it is reasonable, as you have yourself indicated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to point out to the House that this Chamber is much more heavily attended for these proceedings than it was a week ago, which could well be due to the fact that those hon. Members who last week were prepared simply to give my right hon. and hon. Friends at the DHSS the benefit of the doubt have had cause for second thoughts.

The point I am making in support of these two amendments is that, if hon. Members had new evidence made available to them through a magazine which they may or may not understand but which clearly indicates to them that there is some reason for doubting whether they should cast in stone a statute which does not give them the opportunity of thinking again, it is obviously right and proper that amendments of this kind should be passed so that, if there are further articles of this kind, further reports, experiments, laboratory tests and test-tube tests during the course of the next 12 months following up the work that has been done by those who wrote this article, they can be taken into account.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has pointed out how important this debate is and how much interest there is in it in the Chamber. He will see that there are probably three times as many hon. Members in the Chamber as we had during the last Opposition Supply Day, which is an absolute measure of the validity and importance of his remarks.

I am on my feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to right a wrong which I feel that my hon. Friend was about to perpetrate. He would not wish to do that. He said that last week our hon. Friend on the Front Bench, who happened at that time to be our hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), when confronted with arguments and facts, was prone to dismiss them with a wave of the hand. In fact, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon was not on the Front Bench at the time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) well knows, he is one of the most courteous Members of the House and would never have behaved in such a way.

Mr. Brown: I was mixing up my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary with the Secretary of State. I withdraw entirely the criticism I appeared to make of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. I hope that my hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take on board what I said and I apologise for wrongly addressing my remarks to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

It must be recognised that year by year, month by month, new evidence is becoming available. The *New Scientist* magazine is not written just for the benefit of scientists. It is not in the Library of the House of Commons as well thumbed as it is today because only scientists read it. It is a magazine which Members of Parliament read and reread and take very seriously. When I went to the Libra early this afternoon, it was a very dog-eared magazine th I picked up, and it had been there only since last Thursda That is clear evidence that hon. Members are deep concerned about the fact that there is an element of doub If there is an element of doubt today, there is bound to b an even greater element of doubt in 12 months' time.

That is why, presumably, my hon. Friends have table these two amendments, so that there may be opportunity for all of us to reconsider the matter in the lig of whatever new evidence may become available. It conceivable that in 12 months' time, as a result of DHS work on the evidence which has been adduced in the *Ne Scientist* article, I may be convinced by my right hon. an hon. Friends at the DHSS to change my mind. I do n think that there is anything wrong in minds being change One of the criticisms that is often made in the House is th hon. Members have closed minds. Opposition Membe often call upon the Government to change their min during Prime Minister's Question Time and other set-piec debates. When Governments change their minds response to an expressed will of the House, few peop then challenge the Government for that. Often w congratulate the Government on having had the good sens to change their mind. If an hon. Member changes h mind, there is nothing wrong in that.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (M Beith) changed his mind. On 3 December 1981 he signe an early-day motion stating that the House is opposed t the artificial fluoridation of the public water supply. Ye by 24 November 1982, he was signing an amendme attacking that motion.

Mr. Beith: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referrin to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Hom Robertson).

Mr. Brown: I apologise. On 3 December the hon Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) signe an early-day motion, presumably in good faith, and ye 11 months later, something happened to change his mind

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful to the hon Gentleman for giving way and for giving me notice tha he intended to raise this earth-shattering matter. I hav been consistently in favour of the fluoridation of the wate supply because of the overwhelming evidence that that beneficial to all concerned. There must have been typographical error because I have been consistent in m approach to the matter.

Mr. Brown: I must accept what the hon. Gentlema has said. He is an honourable Member and we mus believe what hon. Members say on matters of this kind

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Member for East Lothia (Mr. Home Robertson) is a Scottish Member o Parliament. All I can say is that if the hon. Gentleman ha been consistent in that matter it is the only matter he ha ever been consistent in.

Mr. Brown: I shall not be drawn by that intervention The anti-fluoridation organisers of the pure wate campaign have the hon. Member for East Lothian dow as having signed an early-day motion on 3 December 198 and as changing his mind in 1982. It may well be typographical error and of course I believe the hon Gentleman. It is a fairly major error. The hon. Gentlema is a genuine enough hon. Member to say openly an

honestly that that is a mistake. Many of my hon. Friends have changed their mind. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has already referred to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment here.

We all acknowledge and understand the principle of collective Government responsibility. We should not make too much of this. I recall that last week a member of the Government rightly aid at the 1922 Committee that the Government are entitled to expect any Minister of the Crown to support Government legislation, even on a free vote on Government-sponsored legislation. We must acknowledge that there is a type of free vote that goes with a private Member's Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard me rule on that matter some time ago. He should return to discussing the amendment that is before the House.

Mr. Brown: I am trying to say, as simply and concisely as I can, that although some of my hon. Friends sitting on the Treasury Bench have given public commitments to their electors—I have photocopies of letters here, some of which have already been referred to —they should not need to feel that they have been in any way inconsistent. We all acknowledge that they have special responsibilities.

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us more about the inquest in the 1922 Committee, perhaps in terms of it taking 12 months before a verdict is reached?

2.15 am

Mr. Brown: No, I think that that would be out of order, unfortunately. I am supposed not to divulge what goes on in the Conservative Back-Bench 1922 Committee. I do not want to incur the wrath of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) if it is written in *Hansard* exactly what goes on in the 1922 Committee. I am sure that it is all right for us all to read in the *Daily Telegraph* what goes on, but it is stretching the point to read it in the columns of *Hansard*.

The point that I am trying to make is that, while new evidence is being adduced that might change people's minds, there might come a day—I hope that it will not be for a very long time—when each and every one of my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench does not have the burdens of office that so restrict them, for understandable reasons. My hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) occupied positions of Under-Secretary of State and Minister of State. Since they have ceased to occupy those offices, now held by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), they have become signatories to the early-day motion opposed to fluoridation. Something has happened since they left the Department of Health and Social Security to make them change their minds.

There was my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate, and there was my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East. They were sitting there in the DHSS with all the officials and everybody else telling them in the early 1980s, when they held those offices, that they should acknowledge that fluoride was the best thing out to prevent dental caries. They were told that they must recognise that there was no danger to health. Yet when they left office, and left all their advisers behind them, and it was expected that as they sat on the Back Benches they would have ringing in their ears all the scientific evidence that their officials gave them, they signed the early-day motion of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton. They changed their minds although they, more than any other hon. Member, must have known the scientific details. They must have been through all the reports to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health referred a week ago. They would have been in the DHSS reading report after report and getting thoroughly fed up with the very word "fluoridation", yet when they left all that on one side and became free men as Back Benchers, they had no hesitation in signing that early-day motion.

I hope not in the next 12 months, but one or two of my hon. Friends might find themselves in different circumstances. They might find themselves no longer restricted by the understandable and constitutional burden of collective responsibility——

Mr. McGuire: Or the attractions of office.

Mr. Brown: I look at my hon. Friends tonight, and I do not think that they are particularly attracted by their office at the moment. I am a fair and reasonable man, as I think my hon. Friends will agree. The point that I am trying to make is that one day perhaps, for example if my hon. friend the Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, who in the past has consistently opposed fluoridation, ever has the good fortune to be relieved of the cares of office—I hope to goodness that it will not be for a very long time because he is one of the best Vice-Chamberlains we have ever had in the House——

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. Gentleman is talking as if things that have happened since the days that he is talking about have produced only adverse reports about fluoride. However, does he not accept that it is the other way round? More and more studies have been done showing that fluoride is not dangerous.

Mr. Brown: What the hon. Gentleman has just said might have been true of the 1970s, but I do not believe that it is true of the period since 1983. He made a fair point when he referred to the position a decade ago but circumstances have changed quite dramatically since then.

To return to my theme about changing one's mind, there is nothing wrong about that. When my hon. Friends become Ministers their minds have to change overnight. My hon. Friends the Members for Reading, West (Mr. Durant) and for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), who became Government Whips not so very long ago, had to change their minds overnight in favour of fluoridation, although on several occasions in the past they had formed part of the anti-fluoridation campaign. On the basis that when they become Ministers they can change their minds overnight in favour of fluoridation, it is reasonable to assume that they again can change their minds overnight if they cease to be Ministers.

Mr. Fairbairn: Instead of giving these perfervid examples of duplicity, why does my hon. Friend not tell the House that the fact is that those on the payroll vote who pretend that they are for fluoride are not for fluoride; they are not for principle; they are not for anything? They are just for office.

Mr. Brown: No, I cannot agree with that, and my hon. and learned Friend does not make that intervention with clean hands. There are hon. Members who have never had, who will never aspire to have, who will never receive, and who would never accept an invitation to sit on the Front Bench, because there are other hon. Members who are far better qualified to do so.

One can illustrate the point that there are hon. Members, particularly those who sometimes occupy this Bench, who are prepared to change their minds when they become Ministers by showing how it works the other way. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) signed the early-day motion against the compulsory fluoridation of the water supply not once, not twice but three times, three years in succession. He believed that fluoridation was bad. Suddenly, good fortune overtook him. He had the great privilege of becoming the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. Therefore, he had to change his mind overnight about fluoridation. He did not read *New Scientist* or the publications of Her Majesty's Stationery Office to help him to change his mind. He changed his mind overnight for the entirely honourable reason that there was a very important job to be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), who on one occasion signed the early-day motion against fluoridation, found himself one day the Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Minister in the other place. He changed his mind overnight. He did not go to the Library and read *New Scientist* or make up his mind on the basis of HMSO or Department of Health and Social Security publications. The list is endless. If I were to read the complete list, I suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would ask me to resume my seat because of tedious repetition. However, the commitments made in letters at general elections are probably the most important. I do not think that we should get too het-up about early-day motions.

Mr. Golding: Not only is the hon. Gentleman cutting himself off from office for ever more but he will have to examine every single letter that he signs at the time of a general election if he persists with this argument.

Mr. Brown: I have always worked on the assumption that every single letter written by me under my signature must be capable of appearing in inch-high letters in *Private Eye* and every other journal that one can possibly think of. I learnt that lesson within weeks of coming into the House when I wrote——

Mr. Golding: After the election?

Mr. Brown: Unfortunately, after the general election. I remember writing to the hon. Member——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Member can save that for his memoirs and return to amendments Nos. 6 and 17.

Mr. Brown: I shall not pursue that line of argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I remember sending a letter to an Opposition Member which I suddenly found myself reading in "Londoner's Diary". I learnt then that every letter must be capable of appearing across the pages of any journal. I am sure that seasoned and experienced Ministers work on that basis.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, the chairman of the Conservative party, must have realised that some day, somewhere, his letter dated 18 Oct 1978 to Mrs. Bridger of 8, Cross street, Liston Suff when he was fighting a by-election, would be drawn t attention of the rest of his constituents or the Hous Commons. He said:

"Thank you very much for your letter. I find the points you raised particularly interesting and am especially keen o matter of returnable bottles"—

Heaven knows what that is all about—

"but you are right in assuming I am opposed to the compul fluoridation of water and will vote against it whenever it co up."

I do not know whether my hon. Friend is in the Cham I know that he will be in the Division Lobby in an h or two.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: He is in the Tea Room.

Mr. Brown: He is in the Tea Room. Well, when the vote comes, and it will come tonight, we shall watch the way that the chairman of the Conservative p will cast his vote.

My well-respected right hon. Friend the Secretary State for Employment must have known that atten would be drawn to the commitment that he honour gave on 25 April during the 1979 general election to Turner of Washford, Watchet, in Somerset:

"Thank you for sending me the paper about fluoridatio hope that you will excuse me if I do not complete the form at rather hectic time. You know my views, that I am utterly opp to the fluoridation of water"—

my right hon. Friend showed himself to be capable of g and high office when he had the good sense to add rider—

"unless it carries the overwhelming support of people in area."

He may have ascertained their views in some kind of l referendum and will be able to vote accordingly later evening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe Lonsdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) is a distinguished mem of the Whips Office. He revealed his ability to fulfil hig office when he sensibly wrote to Mr. J. Hayward on November 1979 after the general election campaign:

"Thank you for your letter of 17th November about fluoridation of water supplies. On the whole I am not in fav of compulsory fluoridation though I understand that the prac is strongly endorsed by the Royal College of Physicians. As know, however, it is the responsibility of the area he authority to initiate a fluoridation scheme and for the w authority to take action. I note, incidentally, that the North-W Water Authority have decided not to take any action at moment on the decision of the area health authority."

There was a sensible and considered response.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility sport wrote on 20 June to Mrs. Beaumont, of 67 Mal road, Cheam.

Mr. Golding: Is he here?

Mr. Brown: I am not sure whether he is, but if h he will recall his remarks to Mrs. Beaumont:

"Thank you for your letter. I share your views on fluoridati There are many MPs on all sides who are disquieted and I most grateful to you for your support in this matter."

There we have a clear case of many of my hon. Frie who understandably and rightly sit on the Treasury Ben constitutionally and correctly voting for the Bill, ev though, if they were not Ministers, they might have b in another Division Lobby. I do not attack any of them finding themselves in that position, because it co happen to any hon. Member who becomes a Minister

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us, for the benefit of those who are on the run tonight, that he will be reading those letters this week to the 1922 Committee?

2.30 am

Mr. Brown: I even more terrified about speaking to the 1922 Committee than about speaking in the House. It may surprise you to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have sought to catch the eye of the chairman of the 1922 Committee only twice in my political career in the House, which spans six years. I have spoken for about 20 seconds on each occasion, so terrified am I of the atmosphere. Therefore, I shall hesitate to draw this matter to the Committee's attention. Last Thursday, which was one of the two occasions on which I have spoken to the 1922 Committee, I spoke about fluoridation.

Whether one is the Secretary of State for Employment, the Minister for Sport, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household or a Government Whip representing Watford, Reading, West Huntingdon, or Fareham, I say, "There are many of you in the Administration who rightly at some stage have supported the anti-fluoride campaign and sometimes have been unable to support the anti-fluoride campaign."

Mr. Home Robertson: In some instances people face both ways at the same time. I have particularly in mind the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who is the Government Whip and whose name appeared on the letterhead of a letter by the Scottish Pure Water Society sent only a month ago to all Scottish Members of Parliament urging them to vote against the Government. When I last saw the hon. Gentleman, he was urging Government supporters to vote for the Government.

Mr. Brown: We have all found ourselves in those circumstances. Even free men on the Back Benches have on one day been marched by the Government Whips into one Lobby only to be marched in exactly the opposite direction on another occasion. The Government are entitled to get their business through when it is a whipped vote. We have all committed some assaults when we have been on a whipped vote. I am a free man tonight. I am not on a whipped vote. Therefore, I can exercise that freedom. My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench do not have the luxury that I have, but they might one day —I hope that it is not for a long time—have the luxury of being able to change their minds again. If the amendments are passed, we shall afford all the right hon. and hon. Members to whom I referred the opportunity to exercise the freedom that they once enjoyed.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is doing a disservice to our right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. I am sure that my hon. Friend appreciates that one becomes a Minister only if one is a responsible individual and puts oneself in a position to consider all the arguments that a debate throws up. We cannot assume in advance that our right hon. and hon. Friends will all vote the same way simply because they are sitting on the Treasury Bench. I prefer to believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends, being broad-minded intelligent individuals and anxious to consider all the arguments for and against the proposition, will make up their minds on the basis of the weight they attach to the arguments. It is unfair of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to impugn the integrity of our right hon. and hon. Friends in that way.

Mr. Brown: If I have done what my hon. Friend accuses me of, I withdraw any such suggestion. I hope that I shall be forgiven if any of my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench have taken my speech in the way that my hon. Friend hinted they might do. As I said earlier, I am not looking for anything from anybody, so it does not matter one way or the other.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): My hon. Friend has been making amusing play with his colleagues. Would he care to comment on the fact that this Bill is to regulate the fluoridation of water? If the Bill were to regulate lion tamers, it would not necessarily mean that those who supported the Bill were likely to become lion tamers or would wish actually to support lion taming. I would have thought that the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I see no reference to lion tamers in the Bill.

Mr. Brown: I think the point that my hon. Friend was seeking to make was that there are occasions when all of us, whether we are free men or whether we are constrained by the constitutional practice of collective responsibility, go into the Division Lobby in favour of something with greater or lesser enthusiasm. When some of my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench go into the Lobby in support of the Government later, they may bear in mind with a certain lack of enthusiasm their letters to their constituents.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I accept some of the points my hon. Friend has made about people changing their minds and about ministerial responsibility on major party political issues. Will my hon. Friend comment on whether he thinks it is reasonable for the Government to keep trying to press through a Bill when most of the samples of opinion in the party suggest that two thirds of the party, including Ministers and parliamentary private secretaries, are against it? Does he not think that it is just a virility symbol for the Government to try to push the Bill through against the will of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will not pursue that point. We are getting very wide of the amendment, which deals with the time period and whether the words "for one year" should be substituted for the words in the Bill.

Mr. Brown: That is the crucial point of the amendment. We all know that there is a Cabinet reshuffle coming in September. Who knows what that Cabinet resuffle will bring? Who knows who will be free men by 6 March 1986? The whole point of the amendment is to enable those of my hon. and right hon. Friends who may be free men in 12 months' time to change their minds once again, so used are they to the practice of changing their minds.

The importance of the let-out, or long stop, is to protect those of my hon. and right hon. Friends who may find themselves in different circumstances in 12 months' time. It is also to protect people like myself who may find during the next 12 months that my hon. and right hon. Friends have been able to adduce evidence which, although it has

[Mr. Brown]

not convinced me so far, may yet convince me that my decision tonight has been wrong. If they can come up with a Department of Health and Social Security response that the yeast enzyme does not harm the health of an individual if it is attacked by the fluoride bonding, that may convince me. As a layman and a person not involved in the medical profession, I might be persuaded.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State would be the first to agree that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) does not have a closed mind on the subject. He has a very open mind on it. He knows everything there is to know about the subject. He would be the first to be convinced by any new serious evidence that my hon. Friend might adduce in response to the article to which I have referred.

Mr. Fairbairn: Is my hon. Friend seriously suggesting that scientists of the distinction of Steven Edwards, Thomas Poulos and Joseph Kraut of the department of chemistry at the university of California, who prepared the crystal fluoride form of cyclochrome C peroxidase and demonstrated the effects of fluoride, should be so base and dishonourable as to change their opinions in the way that he has suggested?

Mr. Brown: My hon. and learned Friend must acknowledge that overwhelming evidence that is lurking somewhere underground and that has not yet come to the fore might upset what we consider to be the compelling evidence of the article in *New Scientist* of 28 February.

Mr. Golding: Is the hon. Gentleman accusing the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) of being a wobbler on this issue? I can understand the hon. Gentleman attacking those who sit on the Government Front Bench, disposing of their careers one by one, but he cannot turn at this hour on the hon. and learned Member for Burton, who as far as I can see has displayed the most admirable prejudice throughout the proceedings, and accuse him of being a wobbler. Surely he must withdraw.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will resist the temptation. The amendment deals with whether the application should last for one year.

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) to accuse me of displaying prejudice when I have displayed nothing at all this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well that that is a point of argument, not a point of order for me.

Mr. Brown: I shall not go down the route of temptation that was presented to me by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). As the Chair has rightly said, the purpose of the amendments is to enable the House to reconsider the matter in 12 months' time. The reason why we need the long stop of reconsidering the matter in 12 months' time, although the House might not have changed its complexion as a result of a general election, is that minds can change and new evidence can be adduced. Some of my hon. Friends who may wish to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may wish to oppose the amendments and suggest that the period should be longer than one year. A cas be made for giving the House the opportunity to rec the matter after another general election.

This House has a certain view about fluoride. Fr number of letters that parliamentary candidate writing during May and June of 1979 to pros constituents, it was clear that fluoride was an im matter in the minds of many of our constituents.

Perhaps in deciding whether to accept the amen we should consider whether they will permit the H change its mind after a general election, when the complexion of the House may have changed. In circumstances, many of us may be asked for our vi fluoride during a general election campaign, as has happened to some of my hon. Friends who no themselves on the Treasury Bench. Because excellent answers they gave, they became Ministe

Mr. Marlow: As a point of information, could m Friend tell the House what legislation that is passed Government has to be reaffirmed by the next Gover Obviously Governments change and it is open to t Government to repeal an Act of Parliament. What m Friend is suggesting is a constitutional novelty.

Mr. Brown: I had better be careful, Mr. Speaker, or I will incur your wrath. Of cou acknowledge the difficulty of the suggestion that put forward. All that I am saying is that, since min change within the present composition of the minds can certainly change as a result of a change

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my hon. Friend awa the prevention of terrorism legislation must be re every year by the House?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend f intervention. We must, of course, discuss amen that are before the House and not amendments t might have tabled. The ideal situation would Parliament to be able to return to this issue at intervals in the light of new evidence that may forward.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend may not be awa the first measure to be passed every year is the defe the realm legislation, otherwise the nation has no forces. Among the things that the armed forces m is swallow bromide, lest one sex gets off with the ot in the armed forces.

2.45 am

Mr. Brown: I had better not be led down that have spent most of my time in this Chamber since 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon concentrating on s within the rules of order, whatever the subject debate. I shall continue to resist the temptation to st of order.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My hon. Friend might too have dismissed the intervention of my hon. and l Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fair which encapsulated an important constitutional pri namely, that the defence of the realm legislation h to be passed on an annual basis since the Gl Revolution of 1688. It has been subject to that requi because it affects the liberty of the citizen in the sam as the prevention of terrorism legislation must be—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is getting well away from the subject of fluoridation and the amendment.

Mr. Brown: I dismissed the intervention of my hon. and learned Friend only because I would have been out of order in pursuing it.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend agree that not minds but voting patterns have changed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member will also resist the temptation to concern himself with that intervention.

Mr. Brown: Having been a supporter and admirer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, I hope that he will be influenced by what has been said in this debate. Perhaps he will say, "Let us change our minds again. I have been convinced by what hon. Members have said on this issue." All is not lost because he has yet to respond to the cogent case that has been made for the amendment.

After all, with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham, all hon. Members have said with a united voice which has crossed the political divide that the amendment reapresents a resonable compromise. The Second Reading is over. By whatever means — duress or otherwise — hon. Members voted for the measure at that stage. Let us reach a compromise that does not detract from the basic policy which the Government have arrived at and does not set in concrete for ever and a day legislation that should be considered from time to time. If scientific evidence emerges that is critical of the legislation, there should be a let-out. For that reason, I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security will be able to accept the amendment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten) *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for my hon. Friend the Minister to respond to a debate on an amendment which has not yet been moved?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well that I have called the Minister.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like your guidance. The Chairman of Ways and Means has selected amendment No. 17. He did so in his wisdom, and it was wise of him to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment has been moved.

Mr. Golding: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Your ruling is correct, but underlining the point of order is the fact that so far the Member in whose name amendment No. 17 appears has not yet been called to speak. It is difficult to justify——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to criticise the Chair. The Minister has risen and I have called him.

Mr. Crouch: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your help by asking you to advise me and the House whether, by calling my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, it is your intention to curtail the debate, in which a number of Members are still hoping to speak. This is not a light matter and constituents are pressing us on this issue. I have been questioned for not having been a party to debates at earlier stages in the passage of the Bill. I have sat in the Chamber since the beginning of the debate on the two amendments and have sought to catch your eye. I hope that you can assure me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are not curtailing the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is an experienced Member of the House and he knows that I cannot anticipate what may happen at some time in the future. The amendment has been moved——

Several Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has risen and I have called him.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before you rule that the amendment has been moved, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you to check with the *Official Report* or to say who moved the amendment. I suggest that the amendment has not yet been moved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are discussing amendment No. 6, which has been moved, and with it we are discussing amendment No. 17. Amendment No. 6 has been moved, so the debate is in order.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called the Minister, who caught my eye. I assume that he is seeking to reply to the debate.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hestitate to take the matter further, but it is within my clear recollection that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, who moved amendment No. 6, said specifically that he was not moving amendment No. 17 and that he was hoping——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. and learned Member knows the procedures in this place. In this instance amendment No. 6 has been moved and with it we are discussing amendment No. 17. There is no question of amendment No. 17 being moved. The discussion is taking place on amendment No. 6, which has been moved.

Mr. Beith: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point of order has got off on the wrong foot if there is any suggestion of criticism of the Chair. The Minister rose to speak and it is the normal practice of the Chair to call the Minister whenever he rises to speak. The point at issue is that the Minister chose to rise before he had had the opportunity to hear the arguments of the hon. and learned Member who tabled amendment No. 17. Would it not have been for the convenience of the House if the Minister had listened to one more speech, and heard the arguments? Many hon. Members do not see how the Minister can answer arguments that he has not heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the first part of his remarks, which merely reinforces my belief that I was wise to call the Minister. I call Mr. John Patten.

Mr. Lawrence: On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been waiting for an opportunity

[Mr. Lawrence]

to speak, so that I could invite the Chair to say whether there will be two votes on the two amendments. Could you clarify that point before the Minister replies?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot do so at this stage. We are discussing amendment No. 6, the amendment that has been moved and discussed. I call Mr. Patten.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understood you to say that we were discussing amendments Nos. 6 and 17 together. When we reach amendment No. 17 on the Paper, there will be no opportunity for discussion unless you rule that we have been discussing amendment No. 6, that you have divided amendment No. 6 from amendment No. 17, that when we reach amendment No. 17 there will be an opportunity for discussion of that amendment, that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) will have an opportunity to speak to his amendment and that we will know whether there is to be a separate vote. The proceedings as they stand are entirely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When we reach amendment No. 17—it is a long way down the Amendment Paper—I will of course be prepared to listen to any representations that may be made for a Division on that amendment. I call Mr. Patten.

Mr. John Patten: The debate that we have had on the two amendments—the substance of both amendments has been discussed—has been a very good one. The amendments are very important. An outsider looking at them for the first time might well wonder, however, why those particular amendments should have been laid before the House for discussion. Amendment No. 6, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) in a short, succinct and powerful speech, is about the activities of health authorities, and amendment No. 17, which has been discussed extensively during the past three or four hours, is about the possibility of a reference back to Parliament once every 12 months.

An outsider might ask why the amendments are necessary. Health authorities may at any time—monthly, if they have a monthly cycle of meetins—discuss the issue of fluoridation. If issues of safety, principle or practice arose, the authorities could determine on a monthly basis what they proposed to do. Within their own standing orders, over which they have sovereign rights, they may debate fluoridation. Equally, there are many ways in which the House can return to the issue of fluoridation at any stage, should issues of safety, efficacy, practicality, freedom or individual choice be thought to be pressing enough. I recognise the strength of feeling of my right hon. and hon. Friends on these points.

An outsider might be surprised to see the amendments tabled for discussion tonight. I shall seek to explain why the amendments were tabled and why I welcome the chance to reply on behalf of the Government by saying that, as we have seen, my right hon. and hon. Friends who are pressing the amendments are concerned about the critical issue of safety, which concerns the Government just as much as it concerns them.

I will illustrate the principles by turning to the issue of safety—the specific issue raised in the much-quoted article in the *New Scientist* of 28 February. The author of the article is as yet anonymous.

Much has been made of the article entitle
fluoride might damage your health". Various pie
been selected for quotation. I am not accusing
hon. and hon. Friends of being selective in their
quotations. The anonymous resumé sums up a
Edwards, Poulos and Kraut, which describes inve
of a hypothesis about the mode of action of ar
using X-ray crystallography on a complex of the
with fluoride. My scientific advisers tell me
synthesise the complex, the crystallised enzyme
in a solution of fluoride at a concentration
conditions very unlike those of a living cell. Th
of the original paper, which the *New Scienti*
comments on, demonstrated that, in the circumsta
I have described, fluoride formed hydrogen bo
other parts of the enzyme. The House has discus

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

3 am

Mr. Patten: The anonymous article of 28 Fe
the *New Scientist* speculated—I am not using
pejoratively, as it is quite proper to speculate in
circles — whether fluoride can interfere
hydrogen bonding in DNA in a similar fash
authors of the original paper made no such sugges
findings of Edwards, Poulos and Kraut do not
assessment of the safety and efficacy of the fluori
water in one part per million.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr.
knows that we discussed these matters in Com
has been known for decades that fluoride at hi
physiological concentrations can inhibit or enh
action of many enzymes. That is why fluoride is o
as a tool in the analysis of the function of enzym
is no evidence of enzyme inhibition damage in h
a result of consumption of water fluoridated at on
million.

As the anonymous author says——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Patten: The author says:

"a healthy individual can easily cope with tiny doses
from food and drink and this can strengthen the tee
bones".

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. friend give wa
point about anonymity?

Mr. Patten: The article speculates on a broad
scientific arguments out of which comes no
evidence that casts doubt on the safety or effica
addition of fluoride to water. I shall now give w
hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: I was surprised at my hon. F
giving way, as he is normally courteous. I am g
him. He said that the article was anonymous. It
is the editorial of the *New Scientist* and therefor
full backing of the editorial staff and the reputati
magazine. Moreover, the article is not concerne
with the piece of work that my hon. Friend i
about. There is a great deal of other research behi
hon. Friend would be well advised not to dis
article so lightly. Will my hon. Friend give the H
benefit of the research that has no doubt been put
right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for He
last week? He said that he had evidence that s
countries fluoridated the water. Many hon. Mem

surprised at that statement. He has had a week to do the research. Which countries fluoridate water? If my hon. Friend cannot tell us now, he can tell us in a year's time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Order. I hope that the Minister will stick to the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: I was making the point that, if my hon. Friend cannot tell us now, he can tell us in a year's time. That would make the amendment important because the House would have another opportunity to look at the facts.

Mr. Patten: The evidence put forward, not by the editorial, whether drafted singly or corporately by people in *New Scientist*, has been examined by our scientific advisers. Much more importantly, they have examined the article on which the speculations—I use that word in a non-pejorative sense—have been based.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked about what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health said about the number of countries that add fluoride to their water. My right hon. and learned Friend said that there were 40 such countries. Careful and assiduous research by those whom we are lucky enough to have to advise us has produced a list that shows that my right hon. and learned Friend was, uncharacteristically, wrong. The number is not 40 but 41, and I shall write to my hon. Friend to list these countries, which range from Argentina, the Netherlands and Antilles to Venezuela.

I understand the strength of feeling about these two amendments. They have been put down because hon. Members are worried about safety. Both my right hon. and learned Friend and I have given assurances about safety on Second Reading, in Committee, and during the interesting and important discussions on the Floor of the House recently. If ever safety considerations are involved, it will not be a matter of asking the health authority to discuss the issues and saying that, as it had had its annual meeting, it will have to wait for a year to do so, nor that, as we have just had a debate in Parliament, we shall wait another year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will use his powers under the National Health Service Act 1977 to direct health authorities to stop the process of fluoridation immediately on the grounds that it presents some danger to health.

For those reasons, I ask the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. John Cope (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Lawrence *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you give the House some guidance about the status of amendment No. 17?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall gladly do that. If the House wishes to have a Division on amendment No. 17, the Chair is prepared to consider that. It is academic at the moment, because we have much business ahead of us, on amendments that have been selected, before we come to amendment No. 17.

Mr. Lawrence *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for that ruling. Will the hon. Member who tabled amendment No. 17 be given an opportunity to debate it at some stage, and in particular to direct the Minister's mind to an answer to it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that I have made the position clear. The Chair is prepared to consider the possibility of a Division on amendment No. 17, but it does not arise until after all the other amendments have been dealt with.

Mr. Lawrence *(seated and covered)*: You have misunderstood me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was asking not about a Division, but about whether we could have a debate on amendment No. 17, which has not yet been answered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that two amendments have been discussed at some length, and amendment No. 17 has been referred to on a number of occasions during the debate. In other words, it has already been discussed.

Mr. Crouch *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask about amendment No. 17? The Minister has said not a word about what is in amendment No. 17 and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me to decide how the Minister addresses the House. The debate has been in order, and I am now about to put the Question.

The Question is, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Crouch *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You said that it was an academic matter whether the Question——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will take points of order at this stage only about the conduct of the Division. If the hon. Gentleman has further points of order, I will take them after the division.

The House having divided: Ayes 120, Noes 49.

Division No. 140] **[3.07 am**

AYES

Ancram, Michael	Fletcher, Alexander
Arnold, Tom	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Goodlad, Alastair
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Gow, Ian
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Gregory, Conal
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Gummer, John Selwyn
Bottomley, Peter	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Hayes, J.
Bright, Graham	Henderson, Barry
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Howard, Michael
Burt, Alistair	Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Butler, Hon Adam	Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Jessel, Toby
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*	Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Colvin, Michael	King, Rt Hon Tom
Coombs, Simon	Knowles, Michael
Cope, John	Lamont, Norman
Couchman, James	Lang, Ian
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Dorrell, Stephen	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Lilley, Peter
Dunn, Robert	Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Durant, Tony	Lord, Michael
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*	Lyell, Nicholas
Eggar, Tim	Macfarlane, Neil
Fenner, Mrs Peggy	MacGregor, John

MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Renton, Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Budgen, Nick
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Crouch, David
Dixon, Donald
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
George, Bruce
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Parris, Matthew
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Terlezki, Stefan
Wareing, Robert
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 43, Noes 122.

Division No. 141] **[3.21 am**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nick
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Crouch, David
Dixon, Donald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Monro, Sir Hector
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Parris, Matthew
Patchett, Terry
Portillo, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(
Stott, Roger
Terlezki, Stefan
Winterton, Mrs An
Winterton, Nichol

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Golding
Mr. Neil Hamilton

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(S
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Franc
Mayhew, Sir Patric
Meadowcroft, Mic
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grov
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E*
Morrison, Hon P.
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(H
Page, Richard *(He*
Patten, Christophe
Patten, J. *(Oxf W &*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexande
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Ti
Rees, Rt Hon Pete
Renton, Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Co*
Robinson, Mark *(N*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Ang
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Ti
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Puds*
Shepherd, Colin *(H*
Smith, Tim *(Beaco*
Soames, Hon Nich
Spicer, Michael *(S*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eas*
Stradling Thomas,
Thompson, Donald
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon W
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Young, Sir George
Younger, Rt Hon G

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Major an
Mr. Michael Neube

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Fairbairn: I beg to move, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I remind the House that this is a comparatively narrow motion? We cannot go into the merits of the Bill. We are merely deciding whether we should continue with the debate or whether we should draw stumps.

3.30 am

Mr. Crouch: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I feel happier being on my feet when I address the Chair rather than sitting down.

May I explain the point of order that I was seeking to make to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the Division? We have had an extremely valuable and interesting debate on amendment No. 6, during which, with the Chair's permission, we were also able to discuss the content of amendment No. 17. When the Minister replied, he made an adequate reply to amendment No. 6, but we did not hear what he thought about the debate on amendment No. 17, which was very important because it related not to what health authorities might think but to what Parliament might think and do in relation to the whole matter. It is for that reason that I raised the matter. Many of us had made contributions solely on amendment No. 17. I know that we get an opportunity to vote on amendment No. 17 later. Will we have an opportunity to hear the Government's view on it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has largely answered his own point. As he said, amendments Nos. 6 and 17 were debated together, and reference was made during the debate to amendment No. 17. I am not, of course, responsible for ministerial replies, and I am relieved that I am not. If the House wishes to have a Division on amendment No. 17, which has been discussed, the Chair will consider that, but it does not arise now because we shall take that Division in the order in which it appears in the Order Paper, which is after we have disposed of the other three amendments that have been selected. I call Mr. Fairbairn to speak to his motion.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am indebted to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to move the motion. This is the third occasion upon which the House has discussed the Report stage of a Bill that is of fundamental constitutional importance. Our discussions took place on one occasion during what is vulgarly called prime time. I have always liked the adjective "prime". I think that "Prime Minister" is a grand phrase and that "prime time" is a vulgar phrase. We were given prime time and a free vote, and a confused Whip made it absolutely clear to Back Benchers that on a free vote they were to vote for the Government.

I greatly respect the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) that this is a matter of the most serious principle. It is not a laughing matter. It is not a matter upon which the chairman of the Party, who stands beyond the Bar of the House, can change his mind at the click of a whisker because it suits him, having written to a constituent a letter which my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) read out. It is a serious and important constitutional issue.

Certain hon. Members believe that we are not at our best after midnight and that we ought to be tucked up, lovey-dovey, at ten o'clock at night. That seemed to me to be the basis of the article by the deputy leader of the Labour party in *The Sunday Times* on 3 March: that we ought to be grateful to two of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches and to an hon. Gentleman on the Opposition Back Benches for being so audacious as to suggest that this was not the time when men think and when great deeds are done, or ought to be done. But they are, more frequently than not, done. Yet here we are with our payroll vote. The Cabinet are sitting around, making fools of themselves and voting against their consciences in order to keep their beloved offices, cars and salaries. Hurrah! I am delighted.

When I was a child, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an arithmetical scale which said that 22 yards equals one chain. There is now a new arithmetical scale which says that 10 votes against the fluoride Bill equals one office, plus one car. It is ridiculous, but here we are. It is suggested that the Government, exhausted though they are, will stay up all night to try to push through a measure of constitutional significance. This is a matter of freedom and constitutional understanding which the House of Commons should consider. Will any Government of any party seriously say to us that in the early hours of the morning they will attempt to exhaust the spirit of those who honestly believe that it is wrong to tamper, for whatever reason, with the water supply for some spurious purpose that has nothing to do with those who drink the water? Is it seriously to be supposed that this matter will be discussed into the early hours of the morning in the belief that the Government will railroad through this legislation on a free vote?

Let us look at that wonderful word "free". Will we be free to drink water that does not have medication in it? Will we be free to drink anything which is harmful to us? Yes. The Government are going to extend the concept of freedom. There they sit, plot and plan—leather shoes, suede shoes and all the other shoes—our freedom at 3.40 am like the free democratic East German party. Are they plotting freedom to debate? Oh no, not freedom to debate. Freedom to vote? Oh no, not freedom to vote. I will not look at them. I will look away from them. I will look at you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I can point to those who believe in their conscience. They have destroyed freedom, except for the freedom of keeping office for a short time longer. Are we seriously to say that the House, with many important points yet to come on this major issue, should not continue to debate?

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I tabled an amendment to give licence to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, but not licence to wear such frightfully vulgar shoes. I was reminded by my right hon. and learned Friend that last week I withdrew my charge against him that he was snide and arrogant. I do so again tonight. I forgot to put in the adjectives that I thought more appropriate, and that I shall do shortly, depending upon his attitude.

Let us be clear, we are debating important matters. We shall debate them for many hours, endlessly if necessary, because we believe that it is wrong that water, the one substance that the citizen must imbibe should be made a channel for medicine.

[Mr. Fairbairn]

The amendment which I tabled to give liberality to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not selected. It enabled him to put innumerable substances with a fluoride radical into the water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Member must not debate an amendment that has not been selected. We are on a narrow point—whether we should continue to debate the amendments that have been selected or whether we should draw stumps.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not wish to depart from the narrow point that we are debating, which is whether we should continue the debate. May I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker of a letter in *The Times*, which I understand is a journal of some contemporary confusion. The most loyal of its readers seem to doubt whether they should continue to be so because of the activities of some of its correspondents. That does not, I am happy to say, apply to me. You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the point of the letter was that it was wrong that debates on a constitutional principle such as this one should proceed at an hour of night when the public who wish to attend Parliament are unlikely to stay up. The deputy leader of the Labour party in his article in *The Sunday Times* asked whether the public wanted us all to stay up. Apparently the Government want us all to stay up.

I am confused—one moment the Government say that the debate must be short, another moment they say that the debate must be extended and the next moment they say, "We shall never get the payroll votes here again so we had better keep hon. Members here, dead, dying and dotty as they are. There are only 120 of them left."

3.45 am

We are discussing the most important principle that has been brought before the House during the short time I have had the privilege of being a Member. No other substance but water is essential to life. We are discussing whether the Government should add poison to the water. One may say, "It is poison in a dilution that is acceptable." All poisons in sufficient dilution are acceptable.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Including whisky.

Mr. Fairbairn: All poisons in sufficient dilution are acceptable. I did not say that all pleasures in dilution are acceptable. Water can ruin the substance to which it is added as easily as a substance added to water can ruin it. That is the principle we are discussing. It is unconscionable that the House is discussing at this hour of night whether the very substance of life should be poisoned and made a medium for medical or political indoctrination.

I believe that these discussions should not continue at this time. Suppose that Mr. Scargill's Government—if matters had changed during the past 12 months we might have had Mr. Scargill's Government—had discovered a substance that could be added to the water which could cause Labour Members not to resist deselection, to become mad pickets or to take views that were schizophrenic. It could, because many Labour Members are schizophrenic, stop them being schizophrenic. That would be an abominable process. If a substance that cured the common cold were discovered, I do not believe that it should be added to the water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Member is now straying into the merits or demerits of the Bill. We must discuss whether to continue the debate on the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that schizophrenia is an extremely dangerous mental illness? It appears that many who are in a position to govern this country are stricken with that disease in so far as they are two people—a person who, before this debate, opposed fluoride and a person who, during the debate, supported the adding of fluoride as a form of medication.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) will not agree or disagree with that remark.

Mr. Fairbairn: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not do anything so dangerous or, indeed, so schizoid. Having spent my morning in court acting for a paranoid schizophrenic with 11 psychiatrists who could not agree whether he was one or not, I would certainly not waste a moment in imagining that any diagnosis to which the House might come about either themselves or my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) would be accurate or inaccurate. That is not a path down which I would go.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In addition to the points my hon. and learned Friend is trying to make about the wisdom of hon. and right hon. Members staying here until this time of night, debating a major constitutional issue, if we carry on at the speed we have been going at since 10 o'clock, we will be here for a very long time. It has taken until now to debate the first group of amendments. There are three further groups of amendments to be considered. There is also the time we are now spending in debating the motion to report progress. Then there is the possibility of a Third Reading as a conclusion to our debate.

Therefore, it is clearly staring us in the face that we will carry on for so long that we will lose tomorrow's business, including the Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill, which again must be a very important measure to all hon. and right hon. Members. Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that this is no way for the business of this important House to be conducted, with important Ministers charged with the responsibility of looking after great offices of state being kept here until this time? Does he not agree that there should be a more sensible way of trying to consider the matter?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. Those members of the Government who matter are on the Front Bench, because I can recognise by the absence of hair those who are most significant in the matter. We are discussing a matter which I believe to be of major constitutional importance. It is not a matter of which any of my hon. Friends was given notice before being elected at the last election. It was not a matter referred to in the Queen's Speech as coming before Parliament. It has been demonstrated to the Government and to the Government's managers that those of us who believe that it is a matter of the highest principle are not likely to be kicked over the traces by bribery or any other means. It has been demonstrated to the Government that the falsehood of

whipping or the fantasy of giving a false impression that we are coming for a shipbuilding order at 3.30 pm when we are not, will not deceive us.

I would have thought that the proper thing for the Government to do was to take the Bill away. If they want to brutalise through the House against the conscience of those who are their supporters and against the decision of the electorate a matter which is totalitarian in principle and wrong in concept, let them do it, but it will be done in the heat and light of the publicity that they are disturbing the very principles of freedom and liberty. That is why at this time of night we will not allow the matter to be smashed through by the steamroller of a payroll vote, if it is still here. We will not have it done when there is nobody in the Press Gallery to report what we say. We will not have it done in a way which will prevent the other place from destroying the Bill, as I believe they will.

What we are trying to say to the Government and to the Government's managers is that this is a totalitarian measure which hon. Members on all sides of the House believe is wrong. There is scientific evidence to demonstrate that it is evil. The case for it has not been proved. We do not accept that it should be railroaded through.

Mr. Best: Far be it from me to suggest that my hon. and learned Friend suffers from that disability, but will he accept it from me that many of us in this Chamber are not at our best at this time of the morning and, therefore, the standard of debate is likely to suffer? On a matter of such importance, one has heard allegations made against Ministers and Whips which I personally deprecate and believe are grossly unfair. That is the sort of trend that one finds in the small hours of the morning when, inevitably, the standard of debate must be lower. That is something which neither the Bill nor any measure merits in this Chamber.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sorry for my hon. Friend the Member for this unpronounceable place that he represents following the reorganisation of boundaries. Some of us who have been here for a long time used to understand the intelligent language of Great Britain, knew the names of towns and counties, and were able to understand what people's constituencies were. But now we have "osteopathic", or whatever is the name of the constituency which my hon. Friend represents.

I am sorry, but I do not share his view. I do not know whether this is a parliamentary term, but I think that my hon. Friend is being a creep. During the evening, he has been half sucking up to the Government and half defiling them. I am perfectly willing to defile the Government——

Mr. Best: I must reject that criticism. My hon. and learned Friend should know, as I hope the whole House knows, that the short and succinct way in which I moved the first amendment—those are the words which the Minister was kind enough to use when he replied to the debate—was to try to be helpful and not to prolong the debate, in the sure belief that the Minister might have come to the Dispatch Box and accepted two perfectly reasonable amendments. I cannot comment now on the fact that he did not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must not go into the merits of amendments that have already been debated.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) crawls, is it right for his hon. and learned Friend to call him a creep?

Dr. M. S. Miller: He is a creepy-crawly.

Mr. Fairbairn: I would not wish to go into the question of crawling and creeping now, except to say this: what my hon. Friend said to me now in mitigation of his creeping was even more crawling than what he said before. But I do not wish to be dishonest. There are those on the Government Front Bench, with their backs turned to me, who will remember that in the Government of 1974 to 1979, this was the sort of hour when I was at my best, and when we used to make that wretched, awful, frightful Labour Government extremely embarrassed. I remember Mrs. Shirley Williams appearing at the Dispatch Box as the dawn came through the windows. When I was on my feet, she said to me, "The trouble with the hon. Member is that he is half asleep." I said, "Yes, but I am also half awake." And we won that vote.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To help my hon. and learned Friend about the matter of "creeping", I notice that in the *Hansard* report of our debate last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), after making a speech which was the model of brevity for one hour and 50 minutes to start our debate, made his next utterance in column 231, when he said, "Creep! Sycophant!" Those words were directed towards the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must get back to the motion before the House.

Mr. Fairbairn: Now that I have got in the word "creep", which is a good Anglo-Saxon word that has not been disapproved, far be it from anyone who does not understand language to use a word such as "sycophant", which is Greek.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. and learned Gentleman said that he is at his best at this time of the morning. May I say to him that that is the first sign of shizophrenia.

Mr. Fairbairn: All that I can say is, thank God I did not have a bad position to complicate the difficulties that the psychiatrists had with my client this morning. If that was the sort of judgment they had to add to their difficulties, I cannot imagine what would have happened. If the hon. Member cannot even pronounce "schizophrenia", I am not surprised that he is a sycophant.

4 am

This is a matter of the greatest seriousness, which we will not permit to be railroaded through. We are free men in a free Parliament dealing with an important issue on what is laughingly described as a free vote. Mr. Robert Mugabe or Mr. Scargill might describe it as a free vote. After all, Mr. Scargill said today, in effect, "We are free men. We did the best we could. I am proud of us all."

I dare say that tomorrow the Government managers will say, "Free men voted for fluoridation. Free men stayed up till 4 or 7 o'clock in the morning. We marched them up to the top of the hill and we marched them down again." Why will they have done it? Just so that a child's tooth can be filled.

Mr. Marlow: During and since the last Division the Chamber has been stalked by the figures of Cabinet

[Mr. Marlow]

Ministers almost dead with fatigue. These men will be directing our affairs in the days to come. My hon. and learned Friend will agree that it is ridiculous that they should be required, at this time of night, to support this measure of all measures, for which they are not responsible, with which they do not agree, which does not appear in the party's programme and which may have been provided by the Civil Service as a fait accompli to the Government.

These men are expected to run the affairs of the nation and be awake at this ridiculous time of night to support a measure which the political arm of the Government does not support and which the Civil Service arm of the Government may have provided for them. That is why we should pack up this filthy business now and return to it at a time when we can give to it the serious consideration that it deserves.

Mr. Fairbairn: If I were to give the Government advice, they might regard it as I frequently regard advice that I get from some people. At this stage in their term of office — if the Government want to know what I consider is going wrong—Ministers are tired, they have run short of ideas and officials are running ahead of them, putting ideas in their hands, ideas which they grasp like batons in a hurdle race and happily stagger on and hand them on to the next chap. That happens to all Governments, but it is happening now partly as a result of exhaustion.

Ministers have huge responsibilities. After one has been discharging such responsibilities for a considerable time, one ceases to be able to cope. That is why I cannot understand why a libertarian Government devoted to the principles of freedom should be trying to push through Parliament at 4 o'clock in the morning a totalitarian measure that would be unlikely to be accepted at any other time.

Consider what the Government are trying to do at this hour. They are keeping Cabinet Ministers and all their acolytes on the PPS strip awake so that they can vote for a totalitarian measure. I guarantee that if we proceeded now to a Division, not one among the payroll vote would know on entering the Lobby what the vote was in respect of. Yet the vote would be on one of the most totalitarian and unprincipled measures ever to come before the House.

It is said by the Government that we must all take fluoride. If someone is on hunger strike or in the H-block, the only thing with which he can be force fed is water. Those in the H-block are force fed with water—pure water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are discussing the comparatively narrow point of whether the debate should continue, and not force feeding.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not want to stray from the principle, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was saying that even in the most extreme of circumstances we cannot force anyone to drink other than pure water. The Government are pushing through a totalitarian measure at 4 o'clock in the morning. Their aim is to force people to drink water and at the same time to take medicine. Health Ministers think that smoking causes cancer; why do the Government not put something in the water to make us all stop smoking or to make us sick if we do so? They think that drink causes problems; why do they not put something in it to mak sick if we have a drink? If they think that we are constipated—and the Government are—why do they put something in the water to make us all move?

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am sure that we all take my h and learned Friend's point about Ministers becom extremely tired and yet having to be in the Chamber at hour notwithstanding the effect that it will have on t performance later tonight or tomorrow. I accept that is a Bill of some constitutional importance and, therefo it is of importance that the majority of Members have opportunity to discuss it at a reasonable hour. Minis and others who are present at this hour are to congratulated on being in a position to hear the argume at such an extraordinary time but, for good or bad reas others are not present. My hon. and learned Friend n say that that is up to them, but we should assist those v are not here to be able to take part in the debate. T would be done if the motion were to be accepted by Government and we were to continue the debate at a m reasonable hour. That would be more in keeping with constitutional importance of this measure.

Mr. Fairbairn: I agree entirely.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): D the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if we were keep going for a little longer we would reach a reasona hour?

Mr. Fairbairn: I must say—it is a terrible thing me to have to admit—that I am rather fond of the h Gentleman, who is the Opposition's deputy Chief Wh As I have been brought up as a lawyer to believe thi reasonable man is someone to be found on the top deck a Clapham omnibus, I am willing to put him back wh he belongs, which is seat three, top deck, Claph omnibus. He is a very reasonable man. If he leaves House at this reasonable hour, he will have a hell of a catching a Clapham omnibus.

I do not wish the Government to come to the conclus that my stubbornness should immediately promote the I would not wish it to be lost on the House that I beli that this is a matter of such climacteric principle that i wrong that we should be here in the absence of majority of hon. Members passing legislation which on one Division has been supported through the conscie of those who voted.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Nonsen

Mr. Fairbairn: It has been passed, Madam—ta me not—on the payroll vote. I am not saying for moment to my hon. Friend, spreadeagled or otherwi that she does not have a conscience. For that matter, I not care about her conscience or any other part of her

If one substracts from that vote even the gr conscience of the hon. Lady, one will see that those w voted against all of the amendments were outnumbe only because the payroll vote was driven in.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Can my hon. and learned Fri say whether a majority of hon. Members have voted in Division on the Bill?

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must get back to motion.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not know whether a majority have voted, but I do not think that the House understands sufficiently the climacteric principle that the Bill enshrines. It is that if the Government take the view that something should be added to the water, they can pretend that there is a free vote and keep the members of their Geheimer Staatspolizei up until all hours of the night to push it through.

Mr. Gwilym Jones My hon. and learned Friend is not being fair to the Government. We have already considered the collective responsibility of Ministers to uphold Government policy, which the Bill is. Moreover, people are entitled to have a change of heart after considering and debating the matter. The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) suggested that, if we stay here somewhat longer, we shall be here at a reasonable time. He might be theoretically correct but we shall not be more reasonable. Indeed we could become increasingly unreasonable in our deliberations. My hon. and learned Friend mentioned the quality of our debate. When our debate goes on into the early hours of the morning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is developing into a speech.

Mr. Fairbairn: I should be the last to say whether it is possible for my hon. Friend to become more or less unreasonable. He mentioned the possibility of a change of heart. Where are the hearts in front of me? Where are those who, we have been told, wrote to their constituents from their hearts saying, "I am against fluoridation" but whose hearts compel them to keep their jobs? Where is the Parliamentary Private Secretary who has resigned? Where is the change of heart? Where is the chap who has ducked out and said, "At 4 am, surely Mr. Chief Whip, you do not expect me to blackguard my heart"? Not at all. They are all there, those who do not believe in it. I could name them. Their hearts are not on their sleeves but in their little automated driver-ridden cars.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for allowing me to interrupt his second peroration. I should like to bring him back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who said that he doubted whether half of all hon. Members had voted on Second Reading or on the amendments.

Since last week, the seriousness and gravity of the matter may have gravitated to other right hon. and hon. Members who, because of the nature of the business of Parliament have been involved in other activities, quite rightly and properly. They were unaware of the fundamental importance of the issue that we are discussing. It would be right and proper that we should adjourn further consideration of the Bill, with the knowledge that, with the news of the debate tonight, other right hon. and hon. Members will be able to make themselves present at future consideration of the Bill, and to make their own contributions and vote. This is a fundamental issue, and it is becoming increasingly apparent both to the country and our colleagues that this is so. They should have the right to vote on it. If we continue tonight, that right will be curtailed.

4.15 am

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall deal with that matter in a moment. Before those with hearts retreat from the Chamber, I remind them of a great film that many of us may have seen, called "Kind Hearts and Coronets". How many right hon. and hon. Members on the Treasury Bench prefer their coronets to their heart?

This is a matter of such fundamental importance that the House should not be discussing it at this time. It should be given up by the Government. What on earth does it matter if some wretched child in Bedfordshire or Gloucestershire or somewhere else has a hole in its teeth? It can get it mended. If it does not get it mended, it can suffer it. It is not as though we are curing cardiac disease, or something important. This is something that possibly helps a few children.

Dr. M. S. Miller: We could put in something for heart disease.

Mr. Fairbairn: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a particularly totalitarian attitude that may not be appropriate. Putting something in the water to prevent heart disease is the next step. We are talking about a minor irritation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are supposed to be talking not about the merits or demerits of the Bill but about whether we should continue the debate.

Mr. Fairbairn: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was carried away with the concept that we could add something to the water to cure dandruff, although it is clear to me that the Deputy Chief Whip and the Leader of the House might not necessarily benefit.

This is not something that was in our manifesto or in the Queen's Speech. It is a totalitarian measure, allegedly to reverse a law, believed to have been the law of England, put in doubt by a judge in Scotland—a Court of Session judge who did not say it anyway——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, I am sorry to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman again, but he must address his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The fact that we should now adjourn the debate and resume it on another day is obvious from the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary gave to the debate on the previous amendment. He gave an inadequate reply, which shows that he could not have been paying attention during the debate. He paid no attention to amendment No. 17, which is fundamentally important to the House. If we cannot get an adequate reply from Ministers, is it not clear that they are tired, and that we should adjourn, and resume the business on another day, when Ministers can give hon. Members an adequate reply to a long and important debate?

Mr. Fairbairn: There is some substance in what Member for Macclesfield says. Ifmy hon. Friend thought that it was exhaustion or mental inadequacy that had caused the Minister to give the futile and piffling reply that he did, it would add strength to my argument. The reason why he gave the piffling reply that he did was that he did not have a proper answer to the debate. As to the reason why he did not discuss amendment No. 17, which has not even been moved yet and for which I would not have voted anyway because I do not consider that we should trim on this principle, is——

Mr. Golding: Is not the hon. and learned Gentleman ignoring the fact that the Ministers are working shifts? Has not the hon. and learned Gentleman noticed that the

[Mr. Golding]

Minister has actually changed? Does not the hon. and learned Gentleman think that it would be better to continue to observe how many Ministers can be brought out in rota?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am not sure whether I accept what the hon. Gentleman is saying. While the Minister of State had his feet on the Dispatch Box, I noticed that he was wearing what I would call shifts; whether he was also working them, I do not know. In Scottish it is called nimming, but I do not suppose that he would understand so proud a word. Since he seems not to understand words in the English language, he is unlikely to understand that.

Mr. Best: They are "creep"ers.

Mr. Fairbairn: With great respect, I know that my hon. Friend calls them creepers. I got away with "creep", Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would not for a moment call the Minister of State a creeper—and certainly not a brothel creeper or a brothel sycophant, because they are even worse.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend misinterprets what I said. I was referring to the Minister's shoes, not his character.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing the merits or demerits of Ministers. We are discussing a comparatively narrow motion.

Mr. Fairbairn: If I were to go down that path—and nothing would tempt me to follow the Minister in those shoes anywhere for fear of contracting some incurable disease which nothing added to the water could cure—I would say that the creepers all have their backs to me at the moment. Each one was saying that he was creeping away from a great principle at 4.20 in the morning,he was willing to stay here at 4.20 in the morning, he did not care about the principle; he had said that it was wrong, he had written that it was wrong and he had voted that it was wrong, but he was going to remain a creeper; he would stay in office, he would if necessary stay up all night and tomorrow; he would do anything that he was told to do contrary to his judgment and his conscience in order to keep his job; that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is now creeping away from the motion before the House.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I take my hon. and learned Friend to task for the way that he has been treating my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). I would take my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) to task even more so for his comments upon the Minister's speech in reply to the last debate, because the Minister did seek to reply to amendment No. 17 as well as to amendment No. 6. What was wrong with that debate, as is likely to be wrong with the debates for the rest of the night, is that as the hours went on there was superficial concentration, particularly on amendment No. 6. I tried to bring the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to the point by pointing out to him that we were discussing another amendment. Amendment No. 17 is quite a bit different and, with the hours for which we are debating, and the length of the sitting, there will be dissatisfaction among right hon. and hon. Members that we cannot have a separate debate on amendment No. 17 in addition, to the debate that we have already ha amendment No. 6. I observe the length of time tha spent on amendments 6 and 17 grouped together, an in the next group there are five amendments, Nos. 98 29, 11 and 76.

In addition, there is amendment No. 4 and the g comprising amendments Nos. 46, 10 and 78. We complete discussion on those amendments, if we can at the same rate, by 3.15 this afternoon. That is no to consider a matter of such constitutional significa

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. De Speaker. I raised this matter inadvertently in a sli different context before. Last week at about 11.45 after the debate had been running for about one hou minutes, I tried to raise a point of order at about the time that the Whip tried to move, That the Questio now put. We had a conversation—sometimes with hat on and sometimes without it—about whether I in order. The Chair decided to put the Question implied that my hon. Friend had got to his feet before made by point of order.

Like me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you read the *Of Report* from cover to cover and you will know tha sequence of events was a little different——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not sure wha hon. Gentleman's point of order is, but we cannot d what happened on previous occasions.

Mr. Marlow: The *Official Report* will make it that I sought to raise my point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is out of order fo hon. Gentleman to discuss matters that were raised i House some time ago.

Mr. Marlow: The point of order that I was seeki make is important. Under Standing Order No. 31 the C will not entertain the Question being put if a min interest has not been involved in the debate. At that the Liberal party had not been able to put its forward——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is hypothetical we must get on with the debate.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend the Member Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has raised appeared to him to be a point of order. We must a jealous of private imagination.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, N (Mr. Jones) mentioned a matter of greater importan whether we should continue the debate now. He ga large number of figures that appear on the Order Pape he read out Mr. Speaker's selection. I have never numerate, and I am barely literate, but if ever there reason for teachers having an increase in their wage they have to add up such figures they have a good c

We have still to consider many amendments and Third Reading, so we shall be here for a long tim should be obvious to the Government that Back Bench —who have a free vote—are not dyslectic, insan mad. They think that it is so wrong in principle th contravenes the right of humans to drink the substance available to them for the sustenance of life

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and lea Gentleman is again straying from the motion befor House.

4.30 am

Mr. Fairbairn: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to stray from the point. What I am trying to say —and there are heads in front of me that presumably are both listening and rejecting—is that the principle is such an important one that the Government should say that they will close the debate, throw out this stupid Bill; that they will not have the Cabinet Ministers and the payroll vote kept here all night so that they can put before the House so totalitarian a measure, in the absence of the public, of most of the Members of the House and of the authority or wish of their party.

Mr. Best: With respect, I think that my hon. and learned Friend has missed the fundamental point, which is that before this debate started last night there were 111 amendments tabled by hon. Members, all demonstrating their extreme concern. they were all sensible amendments designed to improve the Bill. Several issues of very great importance have been raised during the present debate and it may well be that hon. Members will seek to table further amendments arising from those issues that Mr. Speaker in his wisdom might in due course allow to go forward for further debate. If this matter is to be pushed through at 4.30 in the morning, that gives no opportunity whatsoever to put down any further amendments arising out of the matters of great importance raised by my hon. Friend the Minister and other hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have an intervention within an intervention.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to answer the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has made. I think it is very important that we should have an opportunity to table amendments. Indeed, I tabled amendments that added to the schedule every substance that I could discover in Sach's list of dangerous chemicals and Martindale's pharmacopoeia——

Dr. M. S. Miller: Pharmacopoeia—with a hard "c".

Mr. Fairbairn: I can pronounce it. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should correct me on Greek pronounciation, because I even know what the word means, which I doubt whether he does.

I think it is important that we should be able to understand that there are many fluoride radicals, organic and inorganic, of benzirines and other forms which could be added to the water with great benefit even to the members of the Government. They might even be pacified; they might even understand that those behind them and those in front of them desperately mind about the principle. We might find that N fluorine 2Y222 trifluoracetimine in one part per million might make them see reason. What about adding that to the water, then? They might go home tomorrow, or whenever it is that they are going to go home, and actually smile. That would be a marvellous thing to add to the water, would it not? It would not do them any harm. There are people who say one's lung rots if one eats it, but that does not matter to them, as long as they smile tomorrow.

The Government will no doubt suggest that those of us who believe in the strength of this principle are filibustering. The Government will have understood from the Sunday papers—if they read them—that there is only one substance—and it is not water—which the free Members of a free House have to use. It is called time. If time is to be the embarrassment of the Government, if it is to take us from now until a year from now to convince them that those of us who believe in this principle believe in it for the strongest of reasons; believe that this measure is totalitarian and wrong, that it is an unnecessary measure that the Government should never have introduced and are unlikely to carry in another place even if they carry it in this House, that is how we shall proceed.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. and learned Friend said that someone had been accused of filibustering. I have here the definition of "filibuster" in Webster's dictionary. It speaks of the source being:

"Dutch *vrijbuiter* freebooter, of which the earliest examples are obvious alterations; the present use begins with the adoption of French *flibustier*; this was succeeded by the present form . . . freebooter. . . 1587. . .One of a class of piratical adventurers who pillaged the Spanish colonies in the West Indies in the 17th c."

. Secondly, it

"Applied to the lawless adventurers from the United States who between 1850 and 1860 followed Lopez in his expedition to Cuba, and Walker in his expedition to Nicaragua 1854."

Would my hon. and learned Friend equate himself in any way with either a piratical adventurer who pillaged the Spanish colonies in the West Indies in the 17th century, or someone who was a lawless adventurer from the United States who between 1850 and 1860——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. Fairbairn: I can assure my hon. and learned Friend that I would rather be Walker in Nicaragua than Kinnock in Nicaragua. Anyway, that is not what "filibuster" means.

Mr. Lawrence: It is in the dictionary.

Mr. Fairbairn: It may be in the dictionary. No wonder the law of England is in such disrepute. Even its seniors cannot understand the English language, nor, so far as I can make out, can they consult relevant dictionaries.

"Filibuster" has a simple meaning. It comes from the Greek for "I love" and "buster" meaning Buster Edwards, one of the great train robbers. *[Laughter.]* There is nothing for hon. Members to laugh about. He happens to be my florist at Waterloo. I was extremely distressed to be instructed this very day to defend the son of one of his greatest friends whose father I have defended on many occasions.

Before my hon. and learned Friend gives me advice I wish that he would learn to look up dictionaries with responsibility. He will know, as I do, that the definition of an advocate's clerk is somebody who helps an advocate to get what is coming to him. So I shall not praise him for his advice. Nevertheless, I must go back to where I was before we came to the dictionary meaning of "filibuster".

I was talking about principle and people as literate as my hon. and learned Friend will know that "pr" comes after "ph" in the dictionary. We are dealing with a matter of the greatest principle. We mind about it and we are not willing to see ourselves talked out, knocked out, driven out or driven over by the Government in the middle of the night.

We are not madmen. We are not paranoid schizophrenics who see salt shouting at us, full stops

[Mr. Fairbairn]

threatening us, and so on. I studied medicine, so I understand something of the fluoridation of water. Some of us regard that as the greatest breach of a constitutional principle that could ever happen in a free country. I want the Government to understand that. If necessary I shall add fluoride to their morning coffee, afternoon coffee and next week's coffee until they understand that that is what we are talking about.

All of us mind about children having holes in their teeth. Hurrah. We also mind about people dying of cancer and all sorts of other things. But we are not willing to adulterate the source and support of life——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate this to the motion before the House.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: May I take my hon. and learned Friend back to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who said that there are 111 amendments down on the Order Paper for consideration in our debates, including some six new schedules, matters that will take a long time to go through? About an hour and a half ago, I voted against the closure of the previous debate. Possibly I was selfish in voting against the closure, because I had been trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that my hon. and learned Friends the Members for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) had also been trying to do so. With the closure of the previous debate, even with Back Benchers still wishing to contribute towards it, even with complaints from them that there had been an inadequate reply from the Front Bench to that debate, we are still not getting adequate consideration of the amendments. We have a total of 111 to go through, and we already have two undertakings from the Government that they will bring forward their own amendments in another place. But if we had a more sensible form of debate my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health could bring the amendments back to the House so that we could properly examine them.

Mr. Fairbairn: I think that my hon. Friend is right. The Government should have discovered by this time that they cannot shuffle between late-night discos, which we have now had twice, and decent thé dansants, which we have in the afternoons, because neither works any better. The reason is that there are those in the House who are not willing to shift on principle, not for any reason—not for reason of bribery, office or persuasion, not to let the Government go to bed, not because we are worried, as worry we should, about the state of the teeth of the deputy Chief Whip, not because we think that we should all throw our hands into the Save the Children Fund in order to get a decent pair of shoes for the Minister of State—nothing like that. We are all here because we mind about principle. We are all here, and we shall all stay here, until that principle is acknowledged.

Mr. Golding: Does the hon. and learned Member know that he is putting me in some difficulty? I want to speak against the motion, and I shall not be able to until he has given some reasons for it.

Mr. Fairbairn: As usual, the hon. Gentleman has given a helpful indication of his bias. I have always regarded him as a very biased man. Indeed, who but a postman with all the responsibilities that a postman could have demonstrated such a remarkable commi to the delivery of letters to people who were Left or R or voted this way or that way—a less biased memb the House we could not have. Therefore, for him to to a bias during the debate demonstrates his integrity if not his reason.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I wonder whether I might pr my hon. and learned Friend with an argument th might advance, on which the hon. Member for Newc under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) may later be able to gi some observations. This is a Government Bill. Not have the Government failed to get the majority of Members voting in favour of their Bill but they have to get the majority of Conservative Members voti favour of it. Does my hon. and learned Friend think it is proper and appropriate, however much it may the standing orders of the House, for the Governme railroad the legislation through in this way?

Mr. Fairbairn: It is not in the least proper. The tr about the Government is that they probably have not the Old Testament. It may be that the Bishop of Du has put them off anything like scripture. Even the revd Archbishop of York said that there is not a chap up to whom one can pray. He appears to be able to de York Minster quite suitably, but apparently one i allowed to pray to him. Such was the latest benedic

The judgment of Solomon was an interesting con Nobody divided the baby to please anybody. Solomon threatened to divide the baby because women claimed that the baby did not belong to the o That is the position in which the Government themselves. On the one hand they are saying, "Oh, no your baby. It's a free baby. It's the Back Benchers' b It's the baby of all of you. It's freedom's baby." o other hand they are saying, "We'll smother the little whatever you do."

4.45 am

On the one hand the Government are saying, "Ah, it's our baby; it's a beautiful baby, it's a wonderful b You mustn't divide that baby. We need that baby. that baby to anybody else, but for goodness' sake ke alive." On the other hand they are saying, "Don't you touch that little thing. You get out of the way. We're g to get our big, strong-armed nannies in here to keep out of the way. We'll suckle it. It's our baby." This is about milk, teeth and water, so it is not a bad ide bring babies into the argument. It is the lovely teet babies that we are discussing, yet this wretched child, fluoride baby, is being suckled compulsorily at the pa the deputy Chief Whip——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discus babies' teeth. We are discussing whether the debate sh continue.

Mr. Fairbairn: I was trying to give, Mr. De Speaker, a simple illustration which I hoped that parents of this ghastly, illegitimate child m understand. I was saying that the reason why it should be discussed at this time of night is that this baby bastard. It was not admitted at the time of the wedd which was when this Government were elected. It was admitted at the time of the Gracious Speech, which the time of its conception. Yet suddenly the Governm

produce this loathsome, hideous, Fascist child, say that it is a love child and beseech all of us to adopt it. They say that we are free either to adopt it or to reject it, or to smother it or do anything we like to it. But actually "You're not, darlings. We're going to make sure that this nasty little creature grows up to be Joseph Goebbels." This is all about schizophrenia. We should not be talking about schizophrenia at this time in the morning. The Minister for Health cannot even spell the word, far less understand it.

I am disturbed to be informed that I have been speaking for an hour and a half. I have never addressed a jury, even on a capital murder charge, for more than 50 minutes. Apart from those occasions when I thought that I was doing immeasurable good by talking out the ridiculous totalitarian measures of the 1974 to 1979 Government, I have never addressed the House for that amount of time. However, I am happy to have done so on this occasion because I mind deeply and passionately about the wrongness of the principle that underlies the Bill. It is also totalitarian and unnecessary. The Government should take it away, like any other little baby which has half its head off, put it face down on the pillow and say, "I'm terribly sorry, darling. It was stillborn."

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I acknowledge that this is not the most convenient hour of night to be discussing these matters and that it is probably slightly less convenient than it was when my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) rose to draw attention to the problem. Having listened to his passionate and very prolonged address, I appreciate why he is here at this time of night and why he has spoken at such length. He withdrew the adjectives "snide" and "flippant" that he had used about me before. I am sure that I will give him every opportunity and occasion to put them back.

I acknowledge that my hon. and learned Friend is filibustering because he believes passionately that to proceed with the Bill at all is wrong. He and my other hon. Friends are fighting their corner for a cause in which they believe. I am sorry; it is one of the occasions on which we are divided.

My hon. and learned Friend and I have different views on footwear. I cannot persuade him of the virtue of hush puppies, which I am sure will come back into fashion. They have fallen out of favour in the House at the moment.

I realise that it is an issue of principle that has kept so many of my hon. Friends here. We gave been having a debate of high quality and I think that it could continue. I have not yet spoken in the debate, nor have the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) and my hon. and learned Friend for Perth and Kinross. The earlier debates reached a high standard. We could probably match that, with effort, when we reach further important amendments.

The House should congratulate itself. It has reached line 15 of page 1. There are many important amendments to come. We have made reasonable progress. The matter has been fully and carefully considered. The time has now arrived to make a little further progress. Who knows, after the next amendment it may be an extremely convenient hour to continue the debate because the media will soon be reawakening. Early morning radio will soon be coming on the air and our proceedings could well be broadcast live within a few hours. I suggest that we could make a little more progress before then.

Mr. Cope *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put.:—

The House divided: Ayes 106, Noes 39.

Division No. 142] **[4.55 am**

AYES

Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Best, Keith
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Dixon, Donald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
George, Bruce
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry

Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stott, Roger
Terlezki, Stefan
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wareing, Robert
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Gwilym Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned:—

The House divided: Ayes 38, Noes 103.

Division No. 143] **[5.05 am**

AYES

Best, Keith
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Dixon, Donald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
George, Bruce
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stott, Roger
Terlezki, Stefan
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wareing, Robert

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Gwilym Jones.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Sainsbury and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to move amendment No. 98, page 2, line 1, leave out from 'one' to end of line 4 a insert

'a compound of fluorine which has been tested and found to safe to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to consi at the same time the following amendments: No. 52, page 2, line 10, after 'one' insert 'half of a'.

No. 11, in clause 2, page 2, line 43, at end insert-

'save that no reference to another compound of fluorine shall added except where such compound has been tested to satisfaction of the Secretary of State as to its having no adve effects on any person to receive it'.

No. 76, in clause 2, page 2, line 43, at end insert-

'*(c)* adding a reference to a combination of compounds fluorine and other non fluorine compounds.'.

Mr. Lawrence: I have been sitting patien throughout the night, not having managed to catch y eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I am grateful for t opportunity to participate in this important stage of Bill. Having been called now to speak will restore confidence, which was shattered last week when I w about to speak at a dinner in my constituency and toastmaster said, "My lords, ladies and gentlemen, p for the silence of your Member of Parliament."

Mr. Best: The House will have noticed t amendment No. 98 also stands in my name. My hon. learned Friend will appreciate that I am not moving because I feel unable, at gone 5 o'clock in the morni to devote the necessary attention to what are complica issues. However, I am sure that he will do an excellent j in moving it.

Mr. Lawrence: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for excellent work that he has done so far. With his experien and knowledge of Anglesey, an area which has been for fluoridated for a number of years—much to the conc of the local people, which is one reason why my h Friend is so passionate an opponent of fluoridation— has many important examples to give the House.

It is a pity that he cannot introduce the debate. If he flagging, it may not be possible for my right hon. and h Friends on the Treasury Bench, let alone the rest of payroll, to concentrate closely on these issues at this ho

5.15 am

I should be grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if at outset you make it clear whether you will allow separ Divisions upon the amendments. They are nearly different. Amendment No. 98 would leave out from 'o to end of line 4 and insert

'a compound of fluorine which has been tested and found to safe to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State'.

It is the comprehensive proposition on safety in this group of amendments. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would wish there to be a separate Division on the subject of safety, which is central to our deliberations.

There follow variations of what would be safe. Amendment No. 52 stands in the name of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). I shall leave it to the hon. Gentleman to explain precisely what his amendment implies but I suggest that it implies broadly that 1 mg per litre may be thought by the House to be unsafe and that a ¼ mg per litre would be safer. If life-threatening diseases are triggered by the addition of fluoride to the water, perhaps the logic of the amendment is that they will have the chance to live four times longer, if it is accepted, before suffering the affliction of the evil effects of fluoride.

Amendment No. 29 is the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), which seeks a reduction to ½ mg per litre. The House has the opportunity of deciding whether it wants 1 mg per litre as the level of safety, ½ mg per litre or ¼ mg per litre. That is an issue upon which there might be divided views. It might be possible to hold the view that one is satisfied on the balance of probabilities on the evidence—it can never be higher than that because of the weight of evidence that the poison called fluoride causes damage to health—that one should not be satisfied with 1 mg but might be satisfied with ½ mg and should certainly be satisfied with ¼ mg.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend might find it helpful if I intervene to suggest to him that amendment No. 98, which would leave out from 'one' to end of line 4 and insert

'a compound of fluorine which has been tested and found to be safe to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State',

is the omnibus amendment on safety. It encompasses safety for those who handle fluoride as well as the recipients of it. It embraces the problems of trade unions and statutory water undertakers, the question of protective clothing and whether there should be no need to give notice of termination of contract if suddenly a statutory water undertaker puts fluoride in the water supply.

Amendment No. 11 is much more restrictive, as it concerns the recipients of fluoride and requires the Secretary of State to ensure that they do not suffer adverse effects.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Amendment No. 76, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North is, as one would expect of him, unrelated to the matters that we are discussing now.

We are discussing safety—the most serious and important of the issues involved with fluoridation as, beyond peradventure, it concerns the health of the nation. I am fed up with hearing from all kinds of sources—no doubt we shall hear it from hon. Members who are not here, have never been here, were not in Committee and have not read one page of *Hansard* or, indeed, anything about fluoridation—that there is no evidence of harm to health from fluoridation at one part per million.

There is a massive amount of evidence, which has accumulated quite rapidly during the past few years. When if first took an interest in this subject in 1976, there had been a great deal of evidence in the 1950s and 1960s, but for some reason, it appeared to dry up. There was a revival in 1975, since when there has been a steady flow of studies all over the world, most of which suggest that there is likely harm from putting fluoride in water at one part per million.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) is leaving the Chamber. He gets up from time to time to criticise, but I do not suppose that he has read one of the studies. He does not stay in the Chamber long enough to hear anyone quote them or give evidence. It is important that the evidence is adduced and presented. Right thinking people ought to consider it. It is not enough to say that this is an infringement of the liberty of the individual. We must go further, because there are some people, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who are otherwise freedom loving but say that the small infringement of freedom involved in mass medication is so insubstantial as not to be weighed in the scale against the benefits. We have to argue the case, but it cannot be argued in five minutes. That is partly because the arguments are complicated and partly because there is just a mass of stuff to be considered. It is tedious, and I understand that it is boring and therefore people go away rather than concentrate their minds on the issues.

I come to one small but significant matter. There is a lot of evidence that fluoride of one part per million is mutagenic. That is, it causes abnormalities in cells. The Government, on the advice of the Royal College of Physicians, and no doubt other worthy bodies, repeatedly say that there is no evidence of that. Recently there have been two Japanese reports on the studies of research groups on this subject. When this point was raised during the passage of the Bill, it was said—I think by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), but I may be forgiven for getting it wrong at this time of night—that that matter had been studied, or was being studied by the forces for good. These wonderful scientists, dentists and doctors, who always manage to reassure the Government of the complete safety and integrity of something that is a dangerous poison, were examining the matter.

In the last Session, it was said that as a result of the Strathclyde decision, legislation would have to be introduced. However, when we looked avidly at the Queen's Speech for any mention of a Bill on fluoridation, we did not see it. The astute media cross-examined staff in the Department of Health and Social Services as to the reason why a Bill that had been well trailered was not in the Queen's Speech. Those of us of a cynical mind never believed the story that emerged, which was that consideration of the latest report was holding things up.

Those of us with a very cynical mind thought that there was no mention of such a Bill in the Queen's Speech because, if there had been, those of us opposed to such a Bill would get our supporters organised. Many people would write to Ministers, and that would be terribly embarrassing added to the letters about the restricted drugs list. The rumour was that these reports were being taken seriously by the Government, and were being properly considered, presumably by the Medical Research Council.

I shall read a letter that was written to a lady in Scotland by the information officer of the Medical Research Council, dated 21 February 1985:

"The articles which have recently appeared in the press are a little misleading. The Medical Research Council is not assessing the Japanese report, but is undertaking, at the request of the Department of Health, a research project aimed at

[Mr. Lawrence]

identifying whether sodium fluoride has the ability to induce gene mutation in mouse lymphoma cells. This project is being carried out at the Council's cell mutation laboratory in Brighton. A final report to the Department will be made later this year. No results have been published yet."

This is an interesting letter. First, it tells us that we have been misled. I do not for a moment think that we have been misled by anything that Ministers have said to us, but we and the press were misled into thinking that the Medical Research Council, which is the research council par excellence, do look at scientific developments that might endanger health.

We were misled into thinking that somebody was studying the Japanese reports, but that was quite wrong. The two Japanese reports in 1984 came from Nippon dental university. They purported to show that if one injected fluoride under the skin of hamsters and into embryo cells, into a human cell or into a cultured human cell, the fluoride caused genetic damage. Whether or not scientists are wrong in starting their testing procedures on hamsters, rats or mice, which is the traditional way of doing this for various scientific reasons that the scientists in the House will well understand, the fact that the same effect was being created in a human cell is deeply worrying.

5.30 am

Those are recent reports. They were not available in 1976 when the Royal College of Physicians reported that it was safe, nor were they available in 1983 when we were assured by the Government that it was safe, in 1982, in 1981 or ever. These are recent reports from a serious body, the dental university in Tokyo, where these matters are properly and deeply studied.

What do we hear from the Medical Research Council? The Medical Research Council is not assessing the Japanese reports. Why is the Medical Research Council not assessing the Japanese reports? Why is somebody else not assessing the Japanese reports? I hope that the Minister will make some reference to that, because it seems to me that those reports are worthy of assessment. If there is anything in them — if fluoride under the skin of a hamster, in the cell of a human being, in an embryo cell or in a culture grows into a tumour, what better evidence could we have that there must be a doubt about whether this stuff is as safe as everybody says? That is the first matter on the letter.

The second matter is that the Medical Research Council is engaged on a research project aimed at identifying whether sodium fluoride has the ability to induce gene mutations in mouse lymphoma cells. I do not know how mouse lymphoma cells differ from hamster cells, human cell cultures or any other cells into which sodium fluoride has been injected. It is reassuring to hear that some inquiries and examination are taking place into whether this stuff when injected into living cells causes cancer. But if the Minister had only told the House that he was waiting upon a research project which would advise him in a year or two whether there was any danger of genetic abnormality resulting from the injection of fluoride of one part per million or its equivalent into the cells of a mouse, I doubt very much whether the heart and spirit of the stout souls in the payroll vote would have swept quite so quickly into the Lobby.

In other words, whichever way one looks at t on the one hand the Government are paying no attention to a report from a reputable source; a other hand they are showing such concern about other reports that they have set up a research p their own which is being carried out at Brighto

If the letter were widely enough known—th the hour at which to have it widely enough kno shall take steps to ensure that it is more widely c —I think some hon. Members, perhaps just on might put a question mark over the assurances until such time as the matter is cleared up by the project reporting a clean bill of health.

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend quoted Royal College of Physicians' report. Many peopl that report; that is understandable. When was th published and was the evidence to which he has known at the time of the publication of the rep is an important aspect.

Mr. Lawrence: It certainly was not. My ho the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who is bright at any hour, lost his concentration for a m said earlier that the reports were published in 198 the Royal College of Physicians report was made In that time a great deal happened.

Mr. Best: Is my hon. and learned Friend inte know the reply that I received to three parli questions? I asked the Secretary of State fo Services

"(1) if any studies have been brought to his attenti indicate that fluoride is a cause of genetic damage;

(2) if any studies have been brought to his attenti indicate that fluoride is carcinogenic;

(3) if any studies have been brought to his attenti indicate that fluoride causes damage to plant and anir

The Under-Secretary of State for Health an Security told me:—

"Our independent scientific advisers have consi relevant work on the genetic effects of fluoride as use fluoridation schemes to achieve a concentration of on million in the drinking water of whole communities. T also considered all the available evidence on the effects of fluoride in short term tests, animal carcinogen and the epidemiological evidence"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. G must be brief. This is an intervention.

Mr. Best: I hoped that I could quote the answ Under-Secretary, who went on—

"recently reviewed in the report of the working fluoridation of water and cancer, copies of which are in the Vote Office. They have concluded that there is no leading to an expectation of a mutagenic hazard to ma the industion of heritable abnormalities in the germ cell there is no reliable evidence of any hazard to man in cancer from the fluoridation of drinking water to a con of one part per million."—[*Official Report*, 26 Febru Vol. 74, c. *138*.]

That answer was given two days before th appeared in *New Scientist*. I make no comment a veracity of the comments in that report, but all have had is a brief answer from my hon. Friend th Secretary.

Mr. Lawrence: I am, of course, interested matters. The Department of Health and Social works slowly and its right hand does not always kn its left hand is doing. We have heard about exa that. I tabled questions. To some I have received

I have received answers to questions that I did not ask and I have not yet received answers to some important questions. The DHSS seems not to be working in a co-ordinated way.

It is interesting that until recently we were told that there was no evidence. "No evidence" is what the Royal College of Physicians says. Now we hear "no reliable evidence". That is because the statement "there is no evidence" is a lie; there always was evidence. No doubt the great and the good who want to force this harmful measure upon us brushed all that evidence to one side and said that it was not very good and it was not reliable, but to tell the British people, as the great and the good did in their "Fluoride: teeth and health", upon which successive Governments have relied for encouragement to fluoridate the water, that there was no evidence was to tell them something that was simply untrue.

If there is a court case and the prosecution calls evidence and the defence calls no evidence, it can be said that there is no evidence for the defence. But if there is a court case and the prosecution calls evidence and the defence calls some evidence which is discredited, it cannot be said that there is no evidence; it can merely be said that the evidence is discredited; or, if it is not discredited but just unreliable, it can be said that the evidence is unreliable. The one thing that cannot be said in English is that there is no evidence, there are no studies, because the implication is, and the impression given to people is, that all the scientists in the world have not come up with any study at all which shows that fluoridation is harmful.

Mr. McGuire: The hon. and learned Gentleman is telling us that the argument that there is no evidence to support the case of people like myself and the hon. and learned Gentleman—that is, the anti-fluoridation case—has now been proved to be bogus. I would like him to turn his very able mind to the other side of the coin, the fact that evidence, statistics and facts were given supporting the case for fluoridation which we know were misleading. This is true in particular of the case we have had evidence on in the letter from Dr. Yellowlees, from a Scottish address, where the principal advocate of fluoridation did not himself know the very limited number of people who were getting naturally fluoridated water. That is another aspect to which I hope the hon. and learned Gentleman will turn his attention, because it is equally valid. We should try to demonstrate that that argument for fluoridating was based on false statistics and that misleading statistics were made to sound very authentic.

Mr. Lawrence: I hope in the course of my argument to develop that very point, because it is not just that denials of any harm exist but that some of the bases upon which assertions have been made are fallacious.

For the purpose of crossing an "i" and dotting a "t", I want to refer the House to one of the pages of "Fluoride: teeth and health" where we are assured of the safety of fluoride. It is page 9 of the summary, and the sentence reads:

> "Studies in the U.S.A. and Britain have found no relationship between cancer mortality or cancer incidence and fluoride levels in water supplies."

Does that not give the impression that there is no evidence, although there have been studies, of any relationship between cancer mortality or cancer incidence and fluoride levels in water supplies? That is utterly false, because all the authors meant to say was "There are studies and they show a relationship but we discount them". That is a different matter and it is very misleading. Succes Governments have been misled by that. That can be only justification for successive Governments saying there is no evidence and that fluoride is safe.

5.45 am

The importance of the *New Scientist* article of February 1985 is self-evident. As reported in *The Tir* it says:

> "Evidence that fluoride can interfere with hydrogen bon in a yeast enzyme provides proof that it can affect a component of a living cell."

That is the significance of it. That study was publishe the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* in 1984, volu 2259, page 12,984. I can scarcely believe that any b has 12,984 pages but if what I am reading is correct is so. I suppose that a book on the evils of fluoridat might run into that many pages. It was written by Step Edwards, Thomas Poulos and Joseph Kraut of department of chemistry at the University of Californi Santiago.

That is only a supplement to a research group's rep in 1981 under the control of Dr. John Emsley, a reade chemistry at Kings college, London. He made a ra broadcast about that study which is very interesting listen to. Here was a man who knew nothing about fluor an was not investigating it. He was investigating for ot purposes the subject of hydrogen bonding form between amides in biological systems. He said:

> "My work and the work of my research group has shown fluoride combines itself to other molecules by what are ca hydrogen bonds, and in particular very strong hydrogen bon The implications are that some of the molecules that we h investigated are important chemicals in the living cells in human body. That means that fluoride is not quite so innocu as people previously thought. It was always assumed, and in I think when they started putting fluoride in water 30 years a that fluoride was about the safest salt—by that I mean most unreactive salt that was known—and therefore could interfere in any metabolic processes in the living cell. Wel think that our work has shown that really this must now doubted. Fluoride will interact with salacylic acid, for instan which is an important compound in the body and it will inte with this in the presence of water, and therefore fluoride in wa is not as inert as chemically we used to think it was. In fac can now do all sorts of reactions that otherwise were suspected. There are so many unknown questions now hang over flouride, especially as the result of what we h discovered, that it can interact with things that we though could not interact with before. We found a way in which it do this. It can attach itself to other molecules by its stro hydrogen bonds and when it does that who knows what it is goi to do to these other molecules?"

He added:

> "When I used to hear it said that fluoride would cause can and birth defects about 10 years ago I dismissed it complet because there was no way in which I could see something innocent as fluoride appeared to be at the time doing somethi like this. Now, if you were to tell me that, then I would ha doubts about it, I must admit. We cannot just give it a clean b of health as we used to."

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend may interested to know that my office contacted Dr. Emsl today, who said that he did not feel strongly one way the other about the Bill. He should also be aware th yesterday I spoke with a biochemist who tells me that t danger pointed to in the article occurs only in hi concentrated levels of fluoride, not such as is proposed the Government should go into the water supplies. Agai

[Mr. Best]

I make no comment about the veracity of those statement. But it is right that I should point that out to my hon. and learned Friend so that he can deal with the matter.

Mr. Lawrence: I shall deal with that in a moment because I want to refer to concentration and dose. Before I do, I should like to complete the point that I am making.

Since 1976 and the report of the Royal College of Physicians, which is relied upon, there has been a large number of surveys and research projects throughout the world. I refer to just some. In Poland, at the Pomeranian medical academy, there have been studies on human cells, which concluded that fluoride causes genetic damage. In 1981, at the institute of botany at Baku in Russia, rat studies showed that fluoride causes genetic damage. In 1982 at the university of Missouri in Kansas City, research showed that, injected into mice, fluoride causes genetic damage. In 1983 at the Kunming institute of biology in the People's Republic of China, fluoride injected into deer cells showed that fluoride causes genetic damage. I have reported the two studies in the Japanese dental university in 1984. In addition, research teams from Texas university, Missouri university, the institute of botany at Baku and the cental laboratory of mutagen testing at Freiburg in West Germany have published over 10 papers showing that fluoride causes genetic damage in insects and various plants.

That leads me to a point that I have made before, but I shall make it again, because the audience is different, and the point must continue to be made. It is not just the very odd scientist or dental expert who says that there is danger in this stuff. There is professor Butenandt, a chemist from Munich university, a Nobel prizewinner, professor Murphy, a consultant physiologist, a Nobel prizewinner, and professor Semenov, a chemist from Leningrad university, a Nobel prizewinner—all of them are living Nobel prizewinners, and all have warned against putting fluoride in water. There are several other Nobel prizewinners, but, when we have consulted the various books, it has not been evident whether they are any longer with us. Therefore, I shall not cite their names. The sum total of known Nobel prizewinners over a period of years who have shown themselves to be opposed to fluoridation as a result of studies that they have either carried out themselves or referred to in their particular scientific capacities is at least 11.

There is professor Louis Steyn, the professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Victoria university, profeasor Albert Shatz, the co-discoverer of streptomycin, who stopped Chile from fluoridating, professor Burgstable of the university of Kansas, Dr. James Ebert, vice-president of the United States National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Philip Sutton, formerly the senior lecturer in dental science at Melbourne university and of course Dr. Dean Burk, who for 35 years was the chief psychochemist at the national cancer institute of America. I must point out that that man has been greatly reviled. He has been the subject of attack because his report has been the most frightening of all the reports that have been produced on cancer. It was frightening because it was the most thorough of all the reports. He has been attacked personally as being a charlatan peddling quack medicines. The learned and eminent professor in Britain who thus attacked him had to eat humble pie and retract on pain of a slander action.

That indicates just how the pro-fluoride lobby reacts when somebody of standing says that this stuff is not safe and that we ought not to accept it. They attacked the wrong man. They chose somebody who must know more about cancer and the effects of fluoride than almost anybody else on earth.

Recently there has been the evidence of Paul McCormick, who is a research fellow at Nuffield college, Oxford, Dr. R. A. Holeman, a senior lecturer in bacteriology at Cardiff hospital, Mr. G. J.Roberts, a lecturer in children's dentistry at the Royal dental hospital London, Dr. C. W. M. Wilson, consultant physician in geriatric medicine at the Royal hospital, Lanarkshire and the department of physiology and pharmacy at Strathclyde. I have already referred the House to Dr. John Emsley reader in chemistry at King's college, London, and Dr. Paul Wix head of food science at the polytechnic of the south bank in London. These important research scientists say that fluoride should not be added to water and that there is something wrong with this substance. Are they all nuts? Are they all mad? Are they all so stupid that they cannot see a safe poison when they see it? Or are we to say, as the Government and the pro-fluoridation lobby say, that it is perfectly safe and that nobody of any repute speaks against it?

Mr. Fairbairn; I apologise for interrupting my hon. and learned Friend because he is making an important contribution to the diagnostic and academic understanding of these matters, but the point that he is making is not sufficiently understood. Let us suppose that each of these scientists can be presumed to be a bad scientist. By passing the Bill will the House of Commons be saying that each of these men is irresponsible and wrong in his research, that he is misleading the public and doing gross damage——

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman address the Chair.

Mr. Fairbairn: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At six o'clock in the morning, which is half-way between twelve o'clock and twelve o'clock you will appreciate that I know not which way to turn. I give you my most humble apologies. The Government are not saying that one or two of them may be wrong. It is in fact a finding of guilt against each of them that they are bad scientists. That is the point to which I wish my hon. and learned Friend to address his mind.

Mr. Lawrence: There is no need for me to address my mind to it. As one would expect from a question posed by my hon. and learned Friend, the answer is self-evident. Unless these people are complete idiots who are not worthy of the posts that they hold, or of the money invested in their research, or of their professorships or their Nobel prizes, there may be just some substance in the warnings that they utter. I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for giving way. I think it is important——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman please address the Chair.

Mr. Best: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once I have fallen into error, I hope I shall not do so again. Is it

not a fact that there may be an answer to the points that my hon. and learned Friend is making? I have not had the opportunity to read all the studies to which he referred. They may show that fluoride can cause severe damage to health. Indeed, the Minister said in one of our earlier debates that fluoride can kill one. And of course it can, in high concentrations.

6 am

Will my hon. and learned Friend address his mind to whether those reports related to concentrations similar to that which it is proposed should be put in the water supply as a result of the Bill, or whether they were higher?

Mr. Lawrence: Some of them were low and some were high. The point that my hon. Friend makes is one that we often hear. We heard it from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister in an earlier debate on the instructions of his advisers in the Box. It is an utterly bogus point.

Those scientists use high concentrations to obtain speedy results. If they conclude that with lower concentrations over a longer period the result would be the same, that is a scientific conclusion which answers the point, and which raises serious doubts about the safety of the medicine. It is well known that if something will cause a tumour at 10 times the lower level, a concentration of one tenth of that over a much longer period will be likely to have the same result.

To assume otherwise is to assume that all those people are idiots. They are not giving out the evidence on the basis, "We are showing that 100 times what will be put in the water will cause cancer." They would then conclude that the fluoride was safe because it only causes harm at 100 times the level that will be put in the water. They conclude that it is unsafe because if it is unsafe at 10 or 100 times the amount that will be put into the water, the cumulative effects will be as harmful.

Mr. Jessel *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. Friend who is here only because I promised to give him a lift home, and I regret that kind offer.

Mr. Jessel: I was not going to refer to what my hon. and learned Friend has just said. I was only going to take a lift home from him if he was going home. Until 3.30 we did not know.

In view of what my hon. and learned Friend alleges about the risks from fluoride, does he now advise all my constituents and those of my neighbour, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), who have a common water supply with Twickenham, to stop drinking the water as it contains one part of fluoride per million? Should they also stop drinking tea, which contains fluoride, and obtain their beer from another part of the country?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall come to a longer and more thorough answer to my hon. Friend's point a little further into the day. The short answer is that naturally fluoridated water does not appear to have the same toxic effects as artificially fluoridated water for a number of reasons. That is not just a conclusion that I, a lawyer and politician come to, it is one to which eminent scientists come. I shall refer to them in a moment.

We could draw the conclusion, therefore, that if fluoride is not causing harm it should be left where it is. There are countries that are taking natural fluoride out of their water, because it is even harmful in its natural form at high levels of one part per million.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. and learned Friend is not doing justice to his argument, because if he and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) understood the matter they would know that in Great Britain where fluoride occurs naturally in the water a large amount of calcium also occurs. Calcium takes out fluoride. If any credit is to be given to either element, it is calcium that benefits teeth, and not fluoride. In India, where there is a high incidence of fluoride in the water but no equivalent calcium residue as in Britain, there is major destruction of teeth and bones because of fluoridation.

Mr. Lawrence: In support of what my hon. and learned Friend has said, I should like to cite the figures for Hartlepool and York. Those figures are always cited by the pro-fluoridationists. Hartlepool water contains natural fluoride levels of 1·5 parts per million. York water contains natural fluoride levels of 0·22 parts per million. If the fluoride level of York water were raised to that of Hartlepool, the high standards of teeth care and safety that obtain in Hartlepool would be transferred to York.

York water contains calcium concentrations of 50 parts per million and magnesium concentrations of 43 parts per million. Hartlepool water contains calcium levels of 372 parts per million, which is more than double the amount of calcium in the naturally fluoridated York water, and magnesium levels of 254 parts per million, which is six times as much as in York water.

Whenever I cite those figures, the Department of Health and Social Security says that there is nothing in them, that calcium does not have good effects on teeth or counterbalance the effect of fluoride and that the magnesium concentration means neither one thing nor the other. I shall deal later with those fallacious responses.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. Friend, although I shall not get far if I am interrupted, even by helpful colleagues.

Mr. Brown: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that fluoride has an affinity for calcium, combining with it to form the insoluble calcium fluoride? In that form calcium is deionised and rendered absolutely useless for all the many needs of the tissues, bones and teeth. Fluoride locks up any beneficial effect that calcium might have.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend seems to have been reading my speeches or the same studies and reports that I have read by the same scientists who are nuts, cranks and lunatics, even though they are considered to be important and responsible people in their own field.

I round off my arguments about scientists generally by answering the response that I expect we shall hear again from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, if he graces us with a reply. We have not always been graced with a reply. I do not blame him for that, because when the business managers say, "Get the boys to bed" my right hon. and learned Friend must jump. I do not know whether the public will hear the details of the response. Sometimes it is difficult for Ministers to reply.

In Committee I asked about the effects of fluoride on water pipes. The Department was going to look into that

[Mr. Lawrence]

question. The Department intended also examining the assertion in a booklet issued by the Royal College of Physicians that most of the fluoride used would be derived from sources that would otherwise have been discharged to the sea as waste. I am afraid that, if I have received a response, I have not yet seen it. That explains why some of these important conclusions do not always percolate through to the people who make the decisions.

Mr. Fairbairn: As my hon. and learned Friend has said, not only does fluoride lock up calcium, but calcium locks up fluoride. Therefore, the effect of fluoride in the areas which we are discussing is entirely masked. In regard to the effect of all the matters that he is putting forward, has anybody considered that vegetables accumulate fluoride and that human beings accumulate fluoride? Therefore, the point about 1 part in a million is irrelevant because there are accumulators of fluoride. People on a specific diet get a large ingestion of fluoride which has nothing to do with the control which the Bill attempts to put upon the water supply. If we all drank nothing but water, it would, but we do not.

Mr. Lawrence: Every time I give way a future passage of my speech, which I shall be reaching later in the day, is anticipated by whichever of my honourable, learned and well-acquainted-with-the-subject Friends is intervening. By the time I get there I expect my audience will have forgotten the points that have been made, so they will bear repetition, although I will not repeat them for repetition's sake.

To come back to the point that I was trying to make before I allowed myself to be misled by various hon. Friends, the response of my right hon. and learned Friend is that all these studies were considered by Lord Jauncey. To begin with, some of the more recent studies were not considered by him because he reported at the end of 1983 and some of the reports came out in 1984 and some even in 1985. Therefore, even Lord Jauncey is now water under the bridge. There may be further information to add to that. The real answer to Lord Jauncey is that this was one man's view of a body of evidence which he considered.

Against Lord Jauncey can be set the views of three men, because three other courts of law in the United States of America—who is there amongst us who can say that the legal system in the United States of America does not throw up as good judges as our legal system throws up in the British Isles—considered the same kind of evidence. In most cases the very same experts were speaking on both sides both for and against fluoride in the water. This is what three of them have said.

In 1978 in the Philadelphia case Judge Flaherty, who was no slouch because he is now in the State Supreme Court following his judgment in the fluoridation case, said:

"This court is compellingly convinced of the evidence in favour of the plaintiffs."

Those who were complaining about the addition of fluoride to the water brought an action against the water authority and the water authority lost. Those who brought the action persuaded the judge of the strength of the anti-fluoride case.

As though that was not enough, in 1982 in the Houston case in Texas the judge said that artificial fluoridation of the public water supplies

"may cause or may contribute to the cause of cancer, genetic damage, intolerant reactions and chronic toxicity, including dental mottling in man . . . and may aggravate malnutrition and existing illnesses in man."

This is another judge, a learned gentleman, who has had a lifetime of experience in analysing witnesses and evidence; he came to the conclusion that I have just read out, which shows that none of the mass of evidence that he saw and heard caused him to believe that fluoride was safe.

6.15 am

My third example is Judge Niemann in the Illinois case in February 1982, who concluded:

"The artificial addition of fluoride to the public water supply may have adverse health effects"

and,

"exposes the public to a risk uncertain in its scope of unhealthy side effects."

In those three cases, the findings of fact were more or less identical: thumbs down to the safety of fluoride. One must put that against the judgment of the judge in the High Court of Session in Scotland, who said, "Thumbs up to fluoride." Three down and one up. Surely there is a doubt. Surely we cannot put our hands on our hearts and say, "It is all safe". All those judges could have said of the witnesses, "They are all nuts; they are all crazy; they are all posturing. They are not worth the money that has been invested in them or their positions in universities." The judges could have said that, but they did not. They saw those witnesses, and they did not, because there is at least a reasonable basis for the arguments that they advanced on the unsafeness of fluoride.

Mr. Best: Is it not important to bear in mind the fact that Judge Flaherty found in favour of the plaintiffs, on whose shoulders rested the burden of proof? It was for them to prove on the balance of probabilities—my hon. and learned Friend will correct me if this is not the burden of proof in the United States. If that is so, it was for the plaintiffs to prove their case, and they did so.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend is, as usual, right. I do not believe that it is about the balance of probabilities. The evidence produced by those scientists is much more persuasive than that. It is comforting to know that wiser legal people than myself agree with that.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my very wise hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Fairbairn: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will address his mind to this point. It is all very well in an ordinary civil dispute for a judge to come to a conclusion as to which side he believes. That may be so in an adultery case if a woman claims that she is a virgin and half the obstetricians say that she is, and half say that she is not. The judge must decide whose evidence he accepts. I had a case in which half of Harley street said that a woman was a new tyre which had never been on the road, and another lot said that her tread had vanished and that she was contrary to the construction and use regulations — *[Laughter.]*

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) must not laugh. This is an important matter. Whatever else we want judges to do, we do not want them to make scientific judgments. Whether Lord Jauncey was right or wrong, and whether these American gentlemen are right or wrong, they are not the people to make scientific

judgments. On one side, huge scientific evidence shows that fluoride is dangerous to health; on the other side, some say that it is beneficial to children's teeth. Who is the Minister to sit in judgment on a scientific matter of such complexity?

Mr. Lawrence: Again, I am driven to accept the force of my hon. and learned Friend's logic and sense, and I use it to advance my argument a step or two further.

A number of other developments in scientifc research into and analysis of the subject of fluoride followed the report of the Royal College of Physicians. One report was concerned with the effects of fluoride on flora, fauna and aquatic life. Reference to that was made in Committee and it was cited earlier in this stage of the Bill, so I will not weary the House with it, except to quote this short passage from the report about frogs:

"The embryonic development of their eggs is delayed when they are submitted to a concentration of 1 part per million of fluorides. Similar effects are observed in tadpoles. Lava of the frog are exposed——"

[Interruption.] I gather that some hon. Friends find that humorous. I suppose that it is, except to those who consider that the flora and fauna of the United Kingdom are important. There is the additional fact that if it poisons the water for the flora and fauna, it also poisons the food chain which is grown in a natural form.

The report goes on:

"The eggs of trout do not hatch when they are exposed to concentrations of 1·5 parts per million of fluorides."

Again, some may consider that amusing. *[Interruption.]* The Minister always laughs when those who put forward the anti-fluoridation case say that it causes mongolism, wet feet, bad tadpoles and all manner of ills. The report adds:

"Although there is a lack of information regarding the effects of the accumulation of fluorides along the food chain, there is enough evidence to conclude that the actual presence of fluorides above certain levels in the aquatic environment is causing important biological damage to both plant and animal systems."

Reporting there was a committee set up by the Government of Quebec in 1978. Was that committee comprised of nuts? Known as the departmental committee on fluoridation its members were the master of science in hydrology; chairman of the Public Hearing Board on Environmental Impact Studies; the assistant director of the Minister of the Environment's Office; the master of sciences in civil engineering; a staff member of the drinking water division of the environment protection services—every one a good, hard-working scientist and bureaucrat earning his crust from the local or regional government organisation — the scientific adviser, Advisory Council on the Environment for Quebec; director of the research centre, Laval hospital, Quebec; the Engineer, environment protection services; the chief of the air pollution control division, the environment protection services; the legal adviser for the environment protection services for Quebec; the technician in water sanitation, environment protection services; a doctor of medicine; and a senior adviser to the Minister of the Environment for Quebec.

There were 10 or more lunatics or nuts, people who were prepared to stop the children of Quebec from having the wonderful benefits of pain-free teeth because of some tadpoles, frogs and an accumulation of a ridiculous mixture in the food chain. They were not just stupid but criminal, for they sentenced children in Quebec to a lifetime of pain, misery and suffering because of some stupid story which had been told to them and which they accepted.

Mr. Fairbairn: I recall the term which was used by the Minister. It was "idiot" and not "nut". He was talking about idiots in hush-puppies, as I recall. He is making a dangerous suggestion, which is that I should use two better adjectives than the one that I had in mind. I think that he should rest partly on his tadpole Bench. I ask my hon. and learned Friend why the Minister of Health, of all Ministers, should mock research. He was no doubt featured in the Division list for the in vitro embryos. It is supposed to be terrible to touch human embryos upon whom we undertake research. The Minister is saying that we must not carry out research on anything lesser than humans and we are not allowed to undertake research on those who are humans. How is research to be undertaken?

I have a suggestion to make which my hon. and learned Friend may consider to be useful. Let us stuff fluoride into the Minister. Let us put it into his shoes, his ears, down his throat and up whatever he gets AIDS from and observe what happens. If he is still with us tomorrow and if he is still willing to believe in Christianity—I understand that those who have fluoride put in those places cease to do so —we shall have been able to carry out an experiment. The rest of us will have to rely on tadpoles.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not know what those who read my hon. and learned Friend's intervention will make of his contribution to a serious argument. I am indebted to him for lightening the tedium of the early hours and the dreadful monotony of my voice as I drag out reports of scientist after scientist and research group after research group. I am delighted that my hon. and learned Friend is still with us.

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that I shall not attempt to cross-examine him. I thought that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) was merely providing him with time to study his papers. I should like to hear what the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) can tell us about trout. In Committee, the junior Minister said:

"Turning to the important issue of fluoride and aquatic life, those assiduous people who advised me were unable to help me much on trout in fresh water".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee H;* 5 February 1985, c. 95.]

That was the advice given to the Minister in Committee. Is the hon. and learned Gentleman saying that he has better information than that which is available to the junior Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security?

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman has not said that that was my hon. Friend's response to the Quebec survey, which I read to the Minister. He toddled along to the officials who advise him and asked what information they had on trout, confidently expecting, no doubt, that they would provide some information to enable him to say that certain suggestions were a load of rubbish and give him a long list of other research projects throughout the world to show that there is no damage to tadpoles and trout, for example. All that he could come up with at short notice was the answer that the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme has read to us. It seems that he has not come up with anything more.

The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security has been assiduous in sending me letters with

[Mr. Lawrence]

additional information that arose from our deliberations in Committee. However, I know that I have not received anything to tell me that the Quebec environment committee's report on the effect on flora and fauna—and fishes, if they are different from fauna—is wrong or has been superseded.

Let us suppose that trout fishermen sitting in the Box have noticed no harm as they fish in the fluoridated waters of Hartlepool, Anglesey or anywhere else. What does that prove? What does it prove if research is undertaken by them and they find that it does not tally with that carried out by the Quebec committee? It proves not a clean bill of health but that people of integrity and knowledge have conducted experiments and reached different conclusions. Who is to say which is right and which is wrong?

6.30 am

Mr. Fairbairn: Two matters embarrass me. First, I call my secretary Trout, and I would not want an experiment to be done on her. Secondly, I have done my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister another insult. I had forgotten, but have remembered that, far from being on the wrong side of the test tube, he is on the right side. He does not want us to bother with any of this nonsense about trying things out on tadpoles, trout, my secretary and others but on real live human beings in test tubes. I have a list of dangerous chemicals all of which he can try out. We have a minister for Health who wants to experiment on real live human embryos in test tubes. I look forward to him answering his mail—and may I not get it—when it is revealed that he wants to study the effects of various concentrations of fluoride and to see whether it is cumulative in in vitro embryos. He obviously has a collection of in vitro embryos——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this an intervention or a speech in the guise of an intervention? In either case, it seems to have little relevance to the subject under discussion or to the speech in which it is being made.

Mr. Lawrence: I was beginning to get interested in my library of information. Once that happens I am lost to the House, and I should not like that to happen.

Mr. Best: My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said that fluoride occurs in concentrations of one part per million in the sea. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend could address his mind to that. What my hon. and learned Friend is saying is cause for concern and the Bill should enable a statutory water provider to reduce the level of fluoride——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That might be a matter which the House should consider, but it is nothing to do with the amendments under discussion.

Mr. Lawrence: I can reply only be reading from the Royal College of Physicians' book entitled, "Fluoride: Teeth and Health" which says:

> "The level in the sea, 1·0-8 to 1·4 mg per litre, would be little affected both because of the enormous dilution that would occur"—

the dilution in the sea is enormous.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The point that my hon. and learned Friend is reading is merely that, if more fluoride is put in tap water, the concentration in the sea will not be raised significantly as it is already at the level to which it is proposed that authorities be empowered to raise it hon. and learned Friend said that I was not able to an questions about fish. I am anxious to know his so about fish. I have to admit that those who advice me answer questions on bees and cattle and people, but are a little stuck with fish.

We are not sure that there is any study concerning apart from the one in Quebec. That study was not foll because fluoride is added to water there as a resu studies that have discredited that which my hon. learned Friend quoted. Can he give any authority fo alarming picture that he is portraying of the threat t nation's trout? Perhaps he has at last opened a new av which we can explore and we can commission yet an epidemiological study to assuage his fears on this new rather unexpected trap.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my right hon. learned Friend for giving me some information that not have before, which is that his Department has not looked at the Quebec study. It is no answer to say tha Quebec study has been discredited. I should like t some of that discrediting. I have not yet seen any in publication. However, as a result of that study, the Qu Government declared a moritorium on compulsory fluoridation, which started in August 1977 and was st force until quite recently. For a number of years, pe took that study seriously. I look forward to receivin documents and references that my right hon. and lea Friend will give me, which show that an equivalent has come up with diametrically opposed conclusion

Such a move would do no harm to my argument, w is that if there are two groups of scientists that su diffferent ideas there is at least a doubt. It does not rea me to hear that some bureaucrats and scientists in Q have reversed the policy, because here the policy is reversed. It was illeal to fluoridate water. They may pretended till the cows come home that it would be la but they all knew in their heart of hearts that it was and as a result the Bill is making fluoride lawful. result, there will be not 10 per cent. of fluoridation 20, 30 or 40 per cent., or perhaps even 50 per cent. is compulsory mass medication, whichever way one at it, for at least half the population.

Mr. Fairbairn: My right hon. and learned Frien Minister has made a great error in his concession. He that the Bill allows for one part of fluoridation in a mi in the water supply. He takes the view that that i maximum safe level. He then tells us that in the sea surrounding our coasts, there is already one part million. Salts do not evaporate, and water does, so time the rivers flow out, they will be taking the flu into the surrounding seawater. Therefore, it will ha ever increasing volume of fluoride in it. Who lives i sea? Apart from Neptune and the mermaids, it is the Who eats the fish? They are eaten by human being land. Accumulated fluoride in fish will be fed to p who will already be having accumulated fluoride in water and vegetables. There is already the maxi amount in the sea, and my right hon. and learned F wants to add to it.

Mr. Lawrence: As my hon. and learned Friend w doubt making a strong contribution to the debate, looking at a reference book that has a number of pag the influence of fluoridation on man's environme

quotes a number of sources, such as the International Society of Research on Nutrition and Vital Substances in 1967, and a number of reports from a number of scientists concerning lettuce and parsley. In 1977, it was found that the accumulation of fluorine in plants is affected by factors other than fluorine in the soil—for example, with plant nourishment—and that there are plants that are fluorine accumulators, such as spinach, lettuce and parsley. There is something about Valencia orange trees and the effect that fluoride has on those. I shall copy these pages and send them to my right hon. and learned Friend so that those who advised him so wisely on this matter can go through all these researches, all of which seem to throw some light on the question.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: May I put it to my hon. and learned Friend that the Minister for Health is demonstrating that the Bill is a typically totalitarian Socialist measure by the fact that for the last four minutes he has been sitting on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Lawrence: I think that that is a little unfair of my hon. Friend. The Minister is probably only exercising his brothel creepers — the trouble with them is that they need air every so often to allow the feet to breathe.

To refer again to the quotation from the Royal College of Physicians on the subject of the dilution of fluoride in the sea water, an interesting point is the side admission made therein—it may be that it wishes that it had not made it — that most of the fluoride used in the fluoridation of water would be derived from sources that would otherwise have been discharged to the sea as waste. That appears to mean that, if this stuff was not used in the public water supply, it would have no other use, but as a waste product that could not be put into the air or into the soil, because it would be water soluble, and must be towed out to sea and dumped as waste like many other deadly poisons.

This raises another interesting aspect. Those in the so-called anti-fluoride lobby — they would not call themselves a lobby because they are not working to inflict anything on anybody—have nothing to gain. There is no financial end that they can achieve by arguing that fluoride ought not to be put anywhere. There is no money to be made out of having water which is fluoride-free. But somebody must make money out of selling to water authorities this product which otherwise would have to be put in boats, expensively towed out to sea and dumped as waste because it has no other value.

I have received a letter from the Minister saying that no manufacturer of aluminium in the country provides fluoride for fluoridation processes. In the example that I gave of aluminium producers producing fluoride which could be used for fluoridated water, I added phosphate producers. The letter that I received from the Minister said nothing about phosphate producers. I can only assume that, on the need-to-know basis, it was embarrassing for the Department to tell me that, while aluminium producers do not produce fluoride for water supplies, phosphate producers may do. Fisons may produce fluoride as an outcrop of its manufacturing process.

Some of those who want to put fluoride in the water supplies may be able to make some money out of it or to save expenditure which would otherwise be incurred in dumping the stuff in the sea as waste. I have no evidence that any company is making £1 million out of fluoridating water. If one weighs up the two sides, the anti-fluoridationists have nothing to gain, and some pro-fluoridationists may have something to gain. That is what is interesting about the reference on which I just stumbled as I tried ineptly to answer a question.

6.45 am

Mr. Best: May I return my hon. and learned Friend to the sea? The intervention by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) surely was wrong. He said that the fish would have stronger teeth as a result of fluoride in seawater. He said that the Minister proposed to have a maximum of one part per million in the water supply. That is wrong. Clause 1(5) states that the one part per million should apply

"so far as is reasonably practicable".

That does not mean an absolute maximum of one part per million.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Another study has come to hand since the Royal College of Physicians reported and since Lord Jauncey made his report. That report was sent to me during the Committee stage of the Bill——

Mr. Fairbairn: I presume that English lawyers move with a logic which deals with one thing at a time. I shall assist my hon. and learned Friend about the matter which he was leaving, but about which I do not think he was right. The process of smelting aluminium produces vast amounts of waste fluoride which has to be dumped in the sea or somewhere else—or has to be sold. The most dishonest aspect is that the Bill states that there will be no effect on public expenditure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. An intervention must relate either to the speech to which we have been listening or to the amendments under consideration.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not think that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) was accurate. The aluminium industry produces vast amounts of fluoride which it sells——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the amendments.

Mr. Lawrence: In fairness I must tell the House about a letter that I received from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. He said:

"The compounds used in the United Kingdom fluoridation schemes — namely, hexafluorosilicic acid and disodium hexafluorosilicate — are manufactured, as I explained at the Committee stage of the Bill from natural mineral sources. They are both produced by the phosphate fertiliser manufacturing industry. Hexafluorosilicic acid is manufactured in this country and disodium hexafluorosilicate is imported from the USA. The raw materials for the manufacturing process are mineral rocks containing both phosphate and fluoride. Finally, there are two further points which it might be helpful if I made on this issue. First, neither of the compounds of fluoride used in the UK derived, as is often alleged, from the aluminium smelting industry. Secondly, I should like to stress that the manufacturers of the compounds of fluoride have not sought in any way to influence Government policy over fluoridation."

They were quick off the mark, but I do not know how reliable the information is. We shall have to ensure that it is not just a question of someone saying to someone else, "I have never tried to influence you".

The potentiality is there, is it not, for any manufacturing company—and I am not saying that this has been done, I have no evidence that it is being done

[Mr. Lawrence]

—wanting to sell off fluoride to subsidise or give some support for some scientific investigation which may have nothing to do with fluoridation but which a grateful scientist, now being able to be funded in a discipline for which he despaired of getting funds, might find helpful. I am not saying that anything like that has happened here, but the potentiality is there.

My hon. and learned Friend and I—and all my hon. Friends who practise in the courts—know that that sort of thing has been known to happen. We know that it has happened in the United States. I hope it does not happen here and never has happened here, and maybe my hon. Friend is right in saying to me in the letter that no manufacturer has sought to influence Government policy in any way over fluoridation. Maybe they do not influence policy; maybe they influence some scientists. I do not know. I come back to my point that the only people who have anything to gain are some of the pro-fluoridationists; the anti-fluoridationists have nothing to gain.

I come now to a report that I received during the Committee stage from—my hon. and learned Friend is quite right — Mr. C. W. M. Wilson, M.A., M.D., B.Sc., D.Ph, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh and Fellow of the Royal Society. He is a consultant physician at the department of geriatric medicine at Law hospital, Lanarkshire, and the department of physiology and pharmacy at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland — no doubt another crank, another nut, another idiot.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that this gentleman was not refused an honorary degree at Oxford?

Mr. Lawrence: That was a blindingly helpful contribution to the argument, for which I am grateful to the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on this subject. It tells us something about the seriousness with which this subject is taken by Opposition Front Bench spokemen, does it not, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

I will read the letter sent to me, with the report, of which I will send a copy to my right hon. and learned Friend so that his worthy advisers can pore over it to find faults. They always pore over these reports to find faults to discredit them. I have not yet heard of an example of their poring over any report and not managing to find faults. It is wonderful that all these reports are faulty and defective. They lack scientific reason or there are errors of fact. The letter reads:

"We carried out some animal experiments in Strathclyde University. This controlled investigation demonstrated that sensitivity to fluoride ions could be induced in guinea pigs and that the resulting allergic effects could be equally effectively produced by fluoridated tap water. This fluoride sensitivity could be potentiated by simultaneous challenge by food protein. Attention is drawn to the possibility of enhancement of food-induced allergic symptoms by preparing and cooking food in fluoridated water.

"The major scientific conclusion which can be drawn from these results is that evidence is now available which shows that fluoride can exert pathophysiological disordered function effects by virtue of its immune sensitising action rather than through its toxic action. A relatively high proportion of the population is food and water contaminant sensitive and in consequence is potentially vulnerable to allergic challenge. These allergic individuals are not protected by limiting fluoride ion concentrations in mains water to one part in 1 million."

That is another of the harms that apparently result fluoridated water. That is a recent study, produced learned and respectable publication. We should attention to that, unless Dr. Wilson is another of thos just idiots but people who have a wish to inflict pain suffering on children who, but for this kind of re would be blessed with the benefit of fluoride in their which would take away all pain when they go to de because their teeth would be perfect. Anybody who this is the worst kind of inflicter of pain on children. my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister to pay a attention to such reports that appear in ever-increa numbers from the various universities and place learning throughout the world.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. Friend, must have woken up when my alarm went off.

Mr. Marlow: Goodness gracious, no. I have following my hon. and learned Friend with great int I may not have been in the Chamber all the time, but I certainly been with him in spirit. I know from the lo the face of my right hon. and learned Friend the Mi that he has been following my hon. and le Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the Gentleman will address himself to the point that h raised or resume his seat.

Mr. Marlow: I was just coming to that point. My and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Law introduced me in such a way that I had to be pol response.

My hon. and learned Friend was talking about the harm that can be done to children by this som harmful chemical that my right hon. and learned Frie Minister is insisting on throwing into our water su The terrible and dreadful harm that could be done be reduced if the concentration of this chemical inflicted on our society were to be at a lower level th Government are suggesting. All the points that my and learned Friend has been making with such dignity, veracity and distinction at this time of the would be reduced if my hon. and learned Friend coul persuade the House that the concentration of the ch should be reduced.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend him scant justice with the remark with which I greet intervention. I apologise. He has tabled a subs amendment which will add considerably to our disc on that point.

Why is harm caused from fluoride at one pa million in the water supply?

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: Will my hon. and learned Friend his eyes, relax and perhaps refresh himself so that get on with my argument for a few minutes before way to his learned and most useful interventions.

The reason why one part per million in the water is unsafe is because nobody knows what anybo getting. One part per million in the water, or 1 mg pe does not mean that Tom, Dick and Harry will inge one part per million of fluoride in his water consu every day. One moment's thought should make us

that that optimum dose of one part per million is utterly meaningless. Firstly, every person is different. One person can take one part per million, another cannot.

I have read out Dr. Wilson's letter to me about allergies, but I have not wearied the House with the long line of scientific evidence that this evil substance causes allergies in people. This is just the most up-to-date and recent report. People can be allergic, and have allergic reactions at one part per million in their total ingestion when their next-door neighbour and friend may not. That is the first point about the meaninglessness of the one part per million optimum dose.

The second point——

7 am

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment. It depends on how much water a person drinks. There is no such thing as drinking only half a pint of water. Some people drink two pints, some people do not drink any at all. Workers in industry may drink 20 times the average amount of water, and a child may drink half the amount. In fact, small children drink very little tap water. They are the ones who are supposed to be benefited by having fluoride put in the water, but there are not many children who drink a lot of tap water. Young children mostly drink milk, fruit juice, Lucozade or pop—some sugar-saturated preparation — and very little water is drunk.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Neil Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall come to all my hon. Friends in a moment. Perhaps I can clear them all up together, because I know that they are all bursting at the seams, but my argument does not make much sense unless I complete it stage by stage.

The third reason why the figure of one part per million is meaningless is that the fluoride that we ingest comes not only through drinking water. As we have already heard, it comes through the food that we eat. It depends on whether the food has been grown or processed in fluoridated water. It comes in the air that we breathe because there is fluoride in the air. If we drink tea, it has a high level of fluoride in it. Beer has fluoride in it to a reasonably high level. There are all sorts of ways in which the ordinary human being ingests fluoride, and it has nothing to do with the fluoride in the water being at an optimum dose of one part per million.

Mr. Holt: While my hon. and learned Friend was developing the argument about dosage, I was interested in the response from the Minister when he said that the dosage suggested will not do any harm to normal people. That suggests that it may be harmful to those who are not normal. I wonder at what age one becomes not normal. according to the terms used by the Minister. The introduction of the one part per million is detrimental to the health of aged people, according to the Minister's words.

Mr. Lawrence: I have not yet come on to the accumulation of fluoride. I am just talking about a daily ingestion. Later on, if there is time as the day wears on, I hope to deal with accumulation in the system of that poison. Age has nothing to do with it. A child may be born with a kidney disease, with certain allergic conditions, with diabetes, with a thyroid abnormality, even with arthritis. Some children die of cot deaths in the first 12 months of life, and nobody has the faintest idea what causes it. Of course, one area at which people will not look is fluoridated water because they do not wish to see any harm. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health is off again laughing. He cannot laugh because he does not know.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: Will my hon. Friend be silent for a moment?

My right hon. and learned Friend does not know any more than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). No doubt if I had stood here years ago and said that thalidomide caused harm, the Minister would have laughed and said that it was utterly safe.

If I had said that debendox causes harm the Minister would have laughed. It is easy to laugh. I am not saying that there is evidence that cot deaths have been caused by fluoridated water. All I am saying is that nobody knows what causes cot deaths. I shall deal later with how fluoridated water causes distortions in normal body functions and will explain to my right hon. and learned Friend how it is possible that even cot deaths could result from the ingestion of fluoridated water.

My hon. Friend asked whether there is any age at which abnormalities occur. There is no specific age. There are many diabetics whose health will not be improved by drinking fluoridated water. There are also many people on kidney machines and many people of all ages with allergies whose health will not be improved by drinking fluoridated water. These facts are well known because they are well documented. They have not just been plucked out of the air. Nothing that I say is a figment of my imagination. Everything that I say is derived from the reports of scientists. That is one of the reasons why I say that this substance is so awful and its ramifications so wide that we ought to be very careful indeed before we introduce it into our water, let alone force it upon people who do not want it and who do not need it.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend is moving at such a speed that he is in danger of leaving the House behind, because he has touched upon some very important points. He referred to the possibility of harm being caused to children. Any suggestion of that kind would cause great distress to the House. Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the fact that a child who is fed with milk powder mixed with tap water which has been fluoridated is subjected to an intake of fluoride about 100 times greater than would be the case if that child were fed with its mother's milk? Yet again my right hon. and learned Friend on the Front Bench is smiling, but I am sure he would be the first to recommend that babies should be fed with their mothers' milk. The fact that some babies live in areas where the water supply is already fluoridated is a matter of potentially great concern. I should be grateful if my hon. and learned Friend could deal with that point, but while I am on my feet I should be grateful if he would take note of one or two other points.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman could be permitted to deal with one point at a time.

Mr. Marlow: Could I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, finish my points in order to prevent me from having to speak again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman wishes to raise one or two other points in addition to the point he has already raised. His first point seemed to take up a great deal of time. Perhaps he will allow the hon. and learned Gentleman to deal with that point first.

Mr. Marlow: Can I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Lawrence: I had forgotten that the proportion was as high as 100 times greater if babies are fed with powdered milk made with fluoridated water rather than breast fed, but the proportion is substantial and I propose to give to the House some figures that are culled from respectable sources about the level of fluoride that is ingested.

Mr. Nell Hamilton: With regard to what my hon. and learned Friend said about cot deaths, is he aware of at least the coincidence in Australia and New Zealand between heavily fluoridated areas and the number of cot deaths? Is he also aware of a number of theories that exist as to the cause of cot deaths? Many of them can be traced to an inherited fluoride-caused enzyme deficiency in the infant provoked by long-term exposure of the parents to environmental fluorides including those in the water supply. Will he advert to that in any great detail?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that anything to which any hon. Member adverts will be contained in or relevant to the amendments that are before the House. The hon. Member is stretching my patience and that of the House.

Mr. Lawrence: With respect to my hon. Friend, if fluoride causes cot deaths it is the unsafeness which is referred to in the amendment. I shall not weary you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by going in greater depth into the point which my hon. Friend makes so well and powerfully. The point has been made, and I can perhaps move on to other pastures in the same field.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: If I may be allowed to get on, because I see the clock moving very fast and, alas, I have hardly begun my analysis of safety in fluoride.

I shall deal with the figures. To my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister there is no more reputable source than "Fluoride: teeth and health", that wonderful vade mecum of all knowledge on the subject of fluoride in which we are told that there is no evidence of harm. Even that says at page 23:

> "Where there is little fluoride in the water, the average daily intake by adults is less than 3 mg with a maximum of less than 8 mg, while with 1 mg per litre in water the average daily intake is less than 5 mg with a maximum of about 12 mg."

That should frighten anyone who thought that one part per million—the optimum dose—was safe, because there are the great and the good talking about a maximum of 12 mg in the daily ingestion of some people. I shall come on to why that is dangerous in a moment.

I shall refer to two scientists, Dyson Rose and John Marier, of the National Research Council of Canada—of course they are nuts, lunatics and idiots like e else—who in their recent publication "Enviro fluoride 1977" said

> "One of the major factors thought to be contributi increased human exposure to fluoride is the increa fluoride content of food."

They give typical examples:

> "Gouda cheese normally contains 0·27 mg per kg o but after processing with water fluoridated with one million contains up to 2·16."

That is almost 10 times as much fluoride.

> "Some ready to use baby foods are shown to contain 4 and 12 mg of fluoride per kg. and variations of th content of lettuce range from 39 to 226 mg per kg . . increase can arise from three main sources, namely, t fluoridated water in food and beverage processing, the of crops to airborne fluoride and waterborne fluoride irrigated with fluoridated water and the use of fluoride-c fertilisers."

I had forgotten that. It is not just the food proc grown in fluoridated water, it is the fluoride fertilisers in which that food is grown. Those scie us that in north America the adult fluoride intake fi and beverages is 3·5 mg per litre to 5·5 mg per li where the water is fluoridated at a level of one million. The scientists warn that that dose exceeded by people exposed to hotter environmen who drink lots of tea and individuals who suf excessive thirst.

7.15 am

In Britain the highest total fluoride intake for is 6 mg per litre a day where drinking water i fluoride and 7 mg per litre a day where fluoridated. Professor Hardwick of Manchester u points out those facts in the *British Dental Jour* April 1975.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am glad that my hon. and Friend has given way to me when dealing evidence of Professor Hardwick. My middle Hardwick, which is a matter that I hope fluoride erode. The intake of fluoride from lettuce, spinac your steely glance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, predictable. I do not know whether my right learned Friend the Minister will be able to give th of people who eat Edam cheese. No doubt, they h like Reynard the fox—lovely teeth coming ou ears and eyes — if they eat Edam, which h fluoride than anything else in it. If this marvello is so good for us, why does not the Minister have those hideous shoes which he shows off on the Box? Do we have evidence that these edamised, and spinachised people with fluoridated teeth descendants of the rhinoceros and the buck hog, that stick around their heads, proud, glorious a

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. and learned Frie have to wait millions of years before he sees a hon. Friends turned into these dream animals in of "Edam and Ave".

There are other sources of flouride ingestion, fluoride-containing drugs, such as fluphenazine, and fluorothene — no doubt all on the restri since they are obviously vital for life. Perhaps hon. and learned Friend will tell us whether any drugs are on the restricted list because the contribute to people's health. Indeed, they may health. If those drugs are not being used, they

clinical eqivalents of drugs in use. My right hon. and learned Friend has the cornucopia, or pharmacopoeia, which would give us the answer.

Other sources of fluoride ingestion are fruit sprayed with fluoride-containing insecticides — Dr. Waldbott points out that large apples sprayed in that way provide about 1 mg of fluoride—aerosols containing fluorocarbon propellants, teflon-coated pans, which can add a fair amount of fluoride ions to foods cooked in them, methoxyflurane anaesthetics, asbestos, which contains up to 579 parts per million of fluoride, certain brands of Japanese and American cigarettes, fibreglass, which contains up to 1,250 parts per million of fluoride and fluoride-polluted air from factory emissions. That excludes fluoride tablets and toothpastes and the other matters that I have referred to.

We have been told by those who have studied the subject that the average daily intake in Canada amounts to 5·5 mg while a level of 11 mg per day has been recorded in Japan. Dr. W. A. Canell, in his "Medical and Dental Aspects of Fluoridation", tells us that a daily intake of 2·8 mg of fluoride during the first eight years of a child's life will cause an unsightly mottling of its permanent teeth, while 6 mg or more will so disorganise tooth structure as to make it more vulnerable to decay attack.

Even the Royal College of Physicians says that the intake could be almost 12 mg per day. When it was questioned at a press conference on the release of its report, it was unable to offer any opinion on the safe daily dose of fluoride and insisted that it had only been asked to assess the risks up to and including the level of 1 mg per litre ingested in fluoridated water. That is the answer we get from the Minister. When I have asked successive Ministers over the years what a successful daily dose is, I have got no answer as to whether it should be one part, five parts, 10 parts per million, or whatever.

The 1969-75 resolutions of the World Health Organisation specifically stated that drinking water should be fluoridated only

"where the fluoride intake from water and other sources for athe given population was below the optimal level."

May I remind the House that the optimal level was one part per million? In its 1970 monograph the World Health Organisation expressly stated:

"People living in fluoridated areas should avoid foods high in fluoride content."

In the 1953 report to the United Kingdom mission to America it stressed the danger of high fluoride products like bone meal tablets and dentifrices to which fluoride had been added. It said that they should be scrupulously avoided.

Mr. Marlow: Obviously some of us are more at risk than others. For example, to take up the points made by my hon. and learned Friend, those amongst us who eat apples and then use a fluoridated mouthwash, propelled by a fluoridated propellant, and who have been brought up not on mother's milk but on powdered milk in an area where the water supply has been heavily fluoridated should have most cause for concern and should be most worried because we are obviously most at risk. May I ask my hon. and learned Friend whether there is anything in particular that those of us who have most to worry about should do, particularly if we are living in an area which my hon. and learned Friend might envisage as being fluoridated in the future? Is there any antidote or prophylactic that we can take? My hon. and learned Friend has said that possibly there is fluoride in beer. Are there perhaps other trace elements in beer which would react against the poison which has been inserted and thereby neutralise it? Does my hon. and learned Friend suggest that those of us who are most at risk should drink a pint, two pints or even three pints of beer a day, or that we should perhaps take a wee tot of something a little stronger every night before we go to sleep? Would that have the effect of neutralising this poison that may well in future be inserted in water in the areas which are not yet subject to fluoridation?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall come a little later in the day to the antidote to fluoride which, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has already said, is calcium. I encourage my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to drink as much beer as he possible can. That would be good for my constituency. It would be good for the brewing economy. It would even be good for the Chancellor at a time when he is anxious to find ways of cutting income tax. I cannot leave the point without making the observation that, regrettably, nothing in the Bill will entitle anyone who lives in an artificially fluoridated water area as a result of the Bill to have automatic access to non-fluoridated water. That is very worrying.

In response to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), may I give an example of the sort of illness that is affected by high concentrations of fluoride in the intake. This is contained in an article in the *British Medical Journal* of 10 September 1983 by Dr. J. C. Gerster and his colleagues at the rheumatology and rehabilitation centre of the University hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland. They describe two patients who were treated for several months with 40 to 60 mg per day of sodium fluoride in an attempt to counter thinning of the bones—osteopetrosis. They record that both patients suffered spontaneous fractures of the necks of both thigh bones, which broke under the weight of the patients' bodies. The authors suggest that that was due

"to changes in the mechanical properties of the bone induced by the accumulation of fluoride in the bone tissue. Both patients were suffering from a mild degree of kidney failure, so they were not able to excrete fluoride normally, with the resultant build-up of fluoride in the bone."

I note that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister is not laughing at that example. It is equally absurd, is it not, to laugh at the fact that fluoride causes harm to others, including tadpoles, trouts' eggs and whatever else he may find funny. The dose of fluoride—40 to 60 mg per day —is of course much larger than the estimated daily dose from fluoridated water, but in the discussion paragraph, the Swiss doctors state:

"Cases of skeletal fluorosis have been reported in patients with severe renal failure, even with a daily fluoride intake as low as 4 mg."

The House will recall that I referred it to the fact that even the Royal College of Physicians said that the daily dose may increase to as much as three times what causes skeletal fluorosis.

The final paragraph of the abstract of the article in the *British Medical Journal*, which has been produced by Dr. Yellowlees, who will be well known to the ladies and gentlemen who advise the Minister that everything about fluoride is perfectly safe, states:

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"As bilateral femural neck fractures are very rare, these data suggest a causal link between fractures and fluoride in patients with renal failure. Thus fluoride should be given at a lower dose, if at all, to patients with even mild renal failure."

Mr. Michael Brown: In support of the evidence that my hon. and learned Friend has adduced, may I draw his attention to what the science editor of the American Saturday Review said:

"Bones and teeth are not simply fixed fence-posts of the body. They are in a constant state of flux, now giving of this substance to tissues and organs and now taking away. Bones, especially, are storehouses of elements critical to life. Since the bones are the emergency storehouse, should any risk be taken of attaching padlocks to the storehouse doors?"

Mr. Lawrence: That is very graphic. It might almost have come from the mouth of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross, but it came from an even greater scientific authority than my hon. and learned Friend.

7.30 am

I now move on to the way in which the medical evil of fluoride works upon the body. I hope that everyone in the House knows by now that fluoride is a deadly poison, along with arsenic, lead and cyanide. The 24th edition of the United States Dispensary states:

"Fluorides are violent poisons to all living tissues because of their precipitation of calcium. They cause fall of blood pressure, respiratory failure and general paralysis. Continuous ingestion of non-fatal doses causes general cachexia and permanent inhibition of growth. There are analogous changes in teeth. Bones become hard and fragile."

Dr. Gerald Cox, the biochemist, who was the first person to promote public water fluoridation, has said:

"Fluorides are among the most toxic substances."

This is a passage from the British Pharmaceutical Codex:

"Fluorides are cumulative and the continuous ingestion of small quantities in food leads to wasting, weakness, nausea and diarrhoea. It is easier to cause serious symptoms by administering small doses over a prolonged period than by giving a single large dose. Its presence in wines, beers, butter and so on should be prohibited."

It is unlawful to add fluoride to certain foods, because of its toxic qualities. I refer hon. Members to the reference in the Pharmaceutical Codex to fluorides being cumulative. That is the answer to the question, asked earlier in the debate about why one part per million should be toxic. The answer is that it is cumulative and that

"the continuous ingestion of small quantities in food"

causes more serious symptoms than giving one large dose. When, therefore, the Minister says that the study is not worth much because those who conducted it did not put one part per million under the skin of a hamster but 10, 20, 30 or 40 parts, the answer is that small doses over a prolonged period produce worse results than a large single dose. In other words, if a large single dose over a period produces a tumour or some other ill effect, a worse effect may be produced by a smaller dose over a longer period.

That is what the scientists say, not what I say as a politician or lawyer. Nothing that I have said comes out of my imagination; it comes out of the writings of the idiots, lunatics and mad scientists who are all on our side. There is not one mad scientist on the other side. Not one report on the Minister's side contains a fault. If it did, there would be a doubt. If a mad scientist says that something is safe, one must have a doubt about it.

Mr. Best: It is fair to point out that, while fluoride is cumulative, it is also excreted from the body at a certain rate. Is it not a fact, however, that even those who are in favour of fluoride express g because the margin of difference between wh as the optimum level, of one part per m concentration which leads to dental fluorosis problems to which my hon. and learned Frien is, in their opinion, too narrow? That is the biochemists who are in favour of the artificia of the water supply.

Mr. Lawrence: It is even worse than tha the amendment on which to discuss the diff by water authorities which are letting into the precisely one part per million. On a later a may discuss those difficulties, which add poi Friend's intervention.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. and lear in danger of being misled by the interventio Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. E failed to take into account the fact that, Professor Orville-Thomas, the human body one third of the fluoride which it takes in. the fluoride stays in the body and accumula

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon effect of the deadly poison that we cal cumulative in larger ingested doses than the million which is the optimum dose in water. the medical men tell us. We heard about this Friend the Member for Brigg and Clee Brown) an hour or two ago. It deprives the bo because fluoride combines with it and lock leads to damaged heart function. Ha-ha, th do not hear any chuckles and no one is roll laughter so my right hon. and hon. Fri Government Front Bench may not be con what I am saying.

Who makes the claims which I have Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics" in fourth editions entitled "Goodman and Gillm fluoride has a direct toxic action on ca professor J. D. Ebert in *Scientific American* showed that low concentrations of fluorid region which develops the heart muscle child. My right hon. and learned Friend and like to know that Professor Ebert is not a lun a nut or an idiot. He is noted for his brillian embryo. I have no doubt that in another gu of great use in advising my right hon. and l on the future of that problem which his I about to face.

I refer also to the view of Professor Dew is the American professor of pharmacology a at Pretoria university. He writes:

"Fluoride ingestion undoubtedly aggravates t of arterio-sclerotic blood vessels."

It is therefore not surprising that there hav reports of an increase in deaths from he American fluoridated towns. After nine ye in Narburgh, New York, deaths from heart become 73·9 per cent. higher than the Within four years of the beginning of fluorid Rapids, Michigan, deaths from heart disea about 50 per cent., yet the city's populatio about 8 per cent. After 20 years of fluoridat Wisconsin, heart deaths rose spectacularly

the national increase. Before fluoridation started in Antigo, heart deaths were 86·4 per 100,000 population and below the national average. I am indebted for those figures and for much of what I am about to say to Doris Grant for her work in assembling this information.

Mr. Fairbairn: Before my hon. and learned Friend leaves the distinguished work of Professor Evert, who no doubt, in the opinion of the Minister, who is such a distinguished physiologist himself, is an idiot, I ask him to concentrate on the work that he did on the effect of fluoride on cardiac muscle. I am sure that you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that there are three types of muscle in the body. I do not know how many types there are in the Chamber. I am sorry if I have given you the shakes, Mr. Speaker. I did not want to do that. There is what is called smooth or voluntary muscle, which some of us can still operate.

There is involuntary muscle, which is to be found in some repulsive organs which the Minister might have heard of. The third type is cardiac muscle. Fluoride has an effect on the latter, which has the immense and amazing capacity to keep tensing and flexing. Those who do not understand should try to flex their hand 24 hours a day to see how tired the heart ought to get. The professor's work on cardiac muscle and the effect of fluoride on it is the most important point that my hon. and learned Friend has made all evening.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful for that support. History will decide whether my speech has been useful. My right hon. and learned Friend's advisers might decide whether I have made good or bad points, but as I quote only the words of lunatics, nuts and idiots, they probably will not find what I have said acceptable. Some scientists say that the heart is damaged by fluorine. Bone growth is also damaged, as calcium, which is locked up by fluoride, is good for bones. We have bone fluorosis, deformed cows and the horrible results found near factories that spew out fluoride. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) gave an interesting account of the effects of large-scale ingestion of fluoride.

Bones and joints are affected even by low concentrations. Ligaments tend to calcify, as do joints and muscle attachments. They are symptoms characteristic of osteoarthritis, in which microcrystals are formed. That is not me but Schumacher and other researchers, in a study of 1977.

There is also a problem with accumulation. The pro-fluoridation World Health Organisation says that 50 per cent. of ingested soluble fluoride is retained in the body. Professor Orville Thomas says that the human body excretes only one third of the fluoride that it takes in and that the remainder accumulates. Dr. B. C. Saunders of Cambridge university, author of "Advances in Fluorine Chemistry" says that fluorides are prone to cause cumulative poisoning. Dr. W. A. Canell says that the cumulative effects of fluoride are uncertain and unpredictable—and that is someone who is cautiously in favour of fluoridation.

Of special importance is a statement from Dr. J. Forman, on behalf of the United States of America medical-dental committee on evaluation of fluoridation, whose findings are sponsored by over 1,600 physicians, dentists and scientists. He says:

"It is now known that such vital organs as the kidneys, thyroid, heart, liver and lungs can be sites of unusually high fluoride build up. No matter how small the dose, a part of it tends to accumulate in the body. Some individuals may store up to 100 times more fluoride in certain tissues than in others."

What value can one place on the assurance of one part per million, when that is what is happening to the body? Not only is there, through the air and the water and the food, whether it is processed or natural, much more fluoride than one part per million, but once it reaches the body, it builds up cumulatively and only a half or a third is passed out. These scientists — nuts, lunatics, idiots, cranks, charlatans, peddling quack medicines—are all wrong when they say that these harms occur.

7.45 am

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way on the point about idiots?

Mr. Dobson: He has superior knowledge.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am happy to claim a superior knowledge of idiocy, because I am a mere Scot. I do not have a beard like the hon. Gentleman. There is an important point to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister should address himself. How does he classify idiots? Here we have professors and scientists of the greatest distinction—PhDs, FRSEs, LRCPs, LRCPEs, MRCPGs. How can the Minister say that people of that distinction of academic qualification are idiots if they disagree with him, but are glorified by their qualifications if they agree with him? I do not understand, and I ask my hon. and learned Friend to address himself to the schizophrenia that my right hon. and learned Friend, the fluffy-shoed Minister, has been showing tonight.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would rather that the right hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) stuck to the amendment.

Mr. Lawrence: I shall do so, and no doubt you had confidence in that from the moment that you rose to your feet, Mr. Speaker. That was a warning to my hon. and learned Friend not to try to mislead me. I shall indeed stick.

Earlier in our proceedings, I was told to hurry the Bill through Committee, as there would be plenty of time on Report to deal with these arguments. However, it is only today that I have been able to make some kind of a speech, and that is because I have stayed until 5 o'clock in the morning; otherwise, there would not have been a chance.

I remember one Minister saying, in an irritated way, "This is ridiculous. We are talking about minute amounts of stuff. The sort of stuff about which we are talking cannot do any harm." I remind my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that it is said that massive amounts of salt cause harm and kill, but small amounts do not. One can take a tablespoon of salt, put it in some water and drink it, and apart from a rather unpleasant taste in the mouth, one is all right. However, if one takes a teaspoon of fluoride and puts it in a beaker of water and drinks it, one would die in about five or six hours. Therefore, this sort of humorous disclaimer—the absurdity of talking about minute quantities as though, because a large quantity kills, a small quantity will not kill, and the suggestion that there is some equality between the various kinds of substances —is ludicrous. The second way in which fluoride has an evil effect, therefore, is cumulatively, by locking up calcium.

The third way in which it exercises an evil effect is by inhibiting enzymes, that is, the complex substances in the

[Mr. Lawrence]

body that are essential to the life process and interact with vitamins, minerals and hormones. Among the enzymes that are found to be particularly susceptible to fluoride are those involved in bone and tooth development, in cellular oxidation processes, in the work of the thyroid gland and in carbohydrate and fat metabolism. The fat-splitting enzyme lipase, we are told by scientists — or nuts, cranks, idiots — is so susceptible that solutions of sodium chloride with a fluorine content as low as one part per 15 million can inhibit by as much as 50 per cent. That is 50 times lower than the solution that is being recommended for our water supplies.

What effect will that have? Fluoride will reduce the ability of the digestive system to digest fats. A study by the researchers McGowan and Suttie in Wisconsin showed that a high fat diet enhances the toxicity of dietary fluoride. This was presented in the *Journal of Nutrition*, 1974.

Fluoride is, of course, a potent poison of the enzyme catalese. That is of particular importance because the enzyme catalese protects the body against cancer and some viruses. It protects the body because it is vital to cell respiration, and the disturbance of cell respiration is known to cause cancer. Otto Warburg, the German scientist and Nobel prizewinner, has found that cancer can have 1,000 causes, but they all bring about the irreversible disturbance of cell respiration. That conclusion was the result of 30 years' work by Warburg on the respiratory mechanism of the cancerous cell.

If that is the route by which catalese can be inhibited by fluoride so that the cells do not breathe and do not repair, with the result that cancer is caused, it is the scientific justification for the epidemiological studies of Burk and Yiamouyiannis, which show that the 10 largest cities fluoridated in the United States compared with the 10 largest cities unfluoridated are subject to a substantial increase in cancer mortality. That is how it happens, if the scientific analysis is right, and I do not know whether it is—I am not a scientist.

Unless we postulate that all the scientists who say that some harm is caused by fluoride are lunatics, there may be something in what some of them say. Some of them are Nobel prizewinners, some are professors and some are reputable researchers. Therefore, as Burk and Yiamouyiannis point out, at least 10,000 Americans may be dying every year from cancer induced, if not caused, by drinking fluoridated water. That inhibits the enzyme catalese, which stops the repair mechanism of the cancer cells.

Mr. Fairbairn: Let us forget catalese for the moment and concentrate on an infinitely more disturbing characteristic of the effect of fluoride compounds. We are not talking about sodium chloride or calcium chloride. The only product considered in Lord Jauncey's verdict was sodium chloride. We are discussing two much more complex substances.

Established research of the most precise kind shows that fluoride disturbs the structure of the nucleus of the cell. It disturbs DNA—the cell structure which gives rise to its multiplication. Substances with fluoride radicals in it have been shown to disturb cells so that carcinoma is caused.

Research is conducted in set proportions. The whether the same effect can be shown in larger or whether cumulatively it has the same effe

Mr. Lawrence: The House must again grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Perth and Kinross for his medical training and He can add depths to the shadow that I am could go into the matter in greater depth on prepared to speak until tomorrow's business course, I am not prepared to do that.

Mr. Best: Is my hon. and learned Friend a amendment is very wide since it covers all saf I hope that he will devote sufficient time to a which he has not yet mentioned. I refer to t employees who handle and carry fluoride, t containers and the safety of everyone who contact with fluoride. The question of protect must be discussed. I hope that I shall be able t speech to such matters.

Mr. Lawrence: Alas, I must disappoint since I shall not have time to discuss those m are covered by other amendments in the grou that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys M knowledgeable on such matters, will be able t House.

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gent it to us, in the middle part of his speech, to technical details. I had an assurance that he w detail. You, Mr. Speaker, have missed much stuff. We have witnessed the broad-brush a eloquence and the compelling words, but not which we have looked throughout the night. I the second half of his speech the hon. Gentleman will provide us with the detail tha confront Ministers later.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful for the comp the confidence. I was trying to provide m should not like the hon. Member for Newc Lyme to be disappointed because he has mad not only to his home life—which he wi necessary to protect the country against fluoridation — but through his many activities. This task was probably the most dif up to support us on this subject, with his determined efforts to bring some sanity into represents. I hope that it will not lose him v that he is one of the most respected Opposit as far as we are concerned because he is so r sensible. That is why we think that it is a g have him on our side, as it were, in this campa all be thought to be nuts, lunatics and idiots as there are some men of sanity and moder Opposition Members we cannot be condemned.

8 am

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend about sensible and moderate hon. Members, that that was a cue for me, Mr. Speaker. I sta to his speech as somebody who has always be with the civil liberties aspect of this busines some unwanted ingredient into the water su potential for harm. However, I have been l my mouth opening ever wider while my hon

Friend has been speaking to the accumulating evidence which he is putting before the House. We are all to an extent, I understand, psychosomatic and I must say that at this stage I am not really feeling myself. Does my hon. and learned Friend agree with Professor J. Orville Thomas that "the human body excretes only one-third of the fluoride it takes in because the other two-thirds stays in the body and accumulates"?

Is that really so, because if two-thirds of the fluoride that I have ingested has accumulated in my body I should like my hon. and learned Friend to let me know what I can do about it? I consider it a very worrying thing.

Mr. Lawrence: I would be very reluctant——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I think that we dealt with that shortly after I came back to the Chair, about three quarters of an hour ago. I think that we should move on to the other technical subjects.

Mr. Lawrence: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for reminding me that that subject had already been covered. May I say how flattering I consider it that you have come at this really rather unpleasant hour for you, with all your responsibilities, and sat and listened to what I have said. If only some of our right hon. Friends and hon. Gentlemen who helped to make the decision which is the basis of this Bill were to listen a bit more, not just to me but to the scientists who are using me, as it were, for the expression of their views, we would not be wasting our time over this obnoxious Bill, which most of the people in the country do not want. This is not merely because they do not need fluoride—17 million people have no teeth at all and cannot possibly benefit from it, not to mention those who will have come to fluoride too late to gain any benefit. There are also those people who are concerned about the mass medication aspect. The hundreds of people who have written to me—and no doubt to many of my colleagues in the House—and who are bitterly opposed to this would be very pleased to know that you, Mr. Speaker, were not the only person listening to the scientific evidence.

I was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North to give some scientific advice. Scientific and medical advice is for my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross. I do not offer that kind of service. Would that I could, but I cannot, and we have to face up to my deficiencies. I hope that at some appropriate moment my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross will be able to supplement what I have been saying in this particular area.

I was talking about the Burk and Yiamouyiannis study. I first came into the whole rotten business of fluoridation because of Burk and Yiamouyiannis. I was a member of the Select Committee on Social Services and we had reports on juvenile delinquency, unemployment and preventive medicines. There was a broad area of departmental study.

We considered preventive medicine and witnesses were called and came. They said that fluoride is the next best thing to apple pie and God and we were therefore in a position to ask them some questions. I asked some questions, as I recall, and my memory is a little hazy and I am also a little tired, and they were based on the Burk and Yiamouyiannis study.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: Will my hon. and learned Friend allo me to continue my response before my concentration completely thrown?

As I recall, we asked the witnesses what they thoug of the Burk and Yiamouyiannis study. To o astonishment, the answer was that they had never heard it. It is perfectly true that that was in 1976 and the Bu and Yiamouyiannis study had only been about for a ye or so. But it was interesting that the Royal College Physicians, while preparing its report which I ha frequently fluorished during the debate, "Fluoride: tee and health", published in January or February 197 received a copy of the Burk and Yiamouyiannis study the 20 largest cities in the United States, 10 of the fluoridated and 10 of them unfluoridated, in about July August. So they had had it for several months. But it w too inconvenient to study it before it came to i conclusions.

There is only a scant reference in a footnote to the Bu and Yiamouyiannis study. Clearly it has not taken it o board and considered it seriously. It is the output of nu and cranks and lunatics and idiots. As a result, Burk an Yiamouyiannis had to do without the benefit of th consideration of these great and worthy medics an scientists, the Royal College of Physicians, whic produced the book.

In due course the establishment turned on Burk an Yiamouyiannis and discovered that some mistakes ha been made. It accused them of making mistakes that the had not made. In due course, the accusers were themselve found to have made serious errors of calculation. Over th course of years all those matters were investigated an thrashed out, but still the stigma attached to Burk an Yiamouyiannis remained.

Why? Because they had produed the most thoroug going analysis—epidemiological, not laboratory—of th functioning of the cancer mortality ratios and rates in larg parts of the United States over 18 years. The critics sai that the figures were wrong, that so many cancer death could not be caused by artificial fluoridation of the wate and that the people had not been rated for age, weight an sex. It just so happened that the 10 fluoridated areas ha the largest number of old people dying of cancer anyway It just so happened that they had the largest number o blacks who had moved in from the country to the towns and in doing so they somehow developed cancer. All th women were in the unfluoridated sector and that mean that the figures were distorted.

Burk and Yiamouyiannis said, "Come off it. There ar not that number of women and men, and anyway the racia characteristic is bad, because how does one know that man is black? Does one knock on his door and say, 'Hello what colour are you?'" The whole business of taking the demographic assessment of who is black and who is white in a mixed community was so difficult that the analyst said, "Look, for goodness sake, forget about race. Unless a man is really black or really white one does not know what it is, particularly if one goes knocking on doors in California in the summer, when everybody is brown."

Burk and Yiamouyiannis said, "Okay, if you insist, we shall weigh the report for age, race and sex." There came a time, when I was very new in this place, when I had an Adjournment debate on the Burk-Yiamouyiannis proposals. I could not have cared less about the stupid subject of fluoridation. What has got me is the cool, calculated attempt either to mislead people or to pretend

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that things are other than they obviously are. It worries me that we in this place should sit here and see such a Bill go through on the assurances of people who simply will not look at the evidence, or, if they look at it, it is always to pick holes or brush it to one side. If one stands back and looks at it all, one sees that every single report by the antifluoridationist professors, lecturers, researchers and Nobel prizewinners is rubbished, and every single report produced by the professors, Nobel prizewinners and scientists on the pro-fluoridation side is impeccable. Even when they cheat over some figures, that is neither here nor there, and I shall not go into the saga of how they had to pretend that they got some of the figures that they analysed themselves, when they had got them from the National Cancer Institute of America, so the same group of figures was used for two supposedly independent surveys. We shall not go into that. Apart from anything else, I find it distasteful to talk about such shenanigans by men of integrity and science.

I had my Adjournment debate, and I said to the then junior Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security, Roland Moyle, "I shall devote this Adjournment debate to the Burk-Yiamouyiannis proposals, because I should like the Minister to let us know precisely what the Government's reaction is" — it was a Labour Government at the time—"and I begin by saying that I shall now explain how they have been weighted for age, race and sex, so please do not say to me that the Burk-Yiamouyiannis survey is a load of rubbish because it has not been weighted for age, race and sex."

I delivered my speech lasting a quarter of an hour, and in due course I sat down, having deployed my case, and up stood the Minister at the Dispatch Box, and, reading from the brief that he had been given by the ladies and gentlemen who advised him in the Box, he said, "The trouble with the Burk-Yiamouyiannis survey is that it is a load of rubbish because it has not been weighted for age, race and sex." It had been weighted for age, race and sex, and still the Minister said that it had not. He did not say that it was a bad weighting, that it was wrong on age, race or sex. He said that the weighting had not been done. I said, "But I have just spent a quarter of an hour telling the Minister that I has been done. Not only have I done that but the documentation is with the DHSS." It was three years before I eventually received a letter of acknowledgement from the DHSS telling me that it accepted that the Burk-Yiamouyiannis proposals had been weighted for age, race and sex.

Therefore, it is very important that my hon. and learned Friend should tell the House, because there are certain areas in this country where there are greater racial concentrations than in other areas. If they are more susceptible to damage from this poison, it is important that the House should be told. It is a matter that the House would wish to take into consideration when it deals with the level of concentration of this poison that we should be permitted to put into our water supplies.

8.15 am

Mr. Best: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May first apologise to my hon. and learned Friend for interrupting him when he was speaking. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, will be aware that a large number of hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. Furthermore, as I mentioned a few moments ago, many of the amendments have not yet been covered in the speech of my hon. and learned Friend. I mentioned one of them in a brief intervention I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, would give some guidance to the House. We have not yet heard the Minister. If the Government were to try to closure the debate on this amendment, which I should deprecate, may I ask for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, about what your advice would be? It would greatly assist those hon. Members who wish to speak.

Mr. Golding: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. and learned Gentleman has been up and down like a jack-rabbit all night while the hon. Gentleman has waited patiently throughout to speak authoritatively on the subject. It is a great disappointment to some hon. Members who also have not spoken that the hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to pressure his hon. Friend out of the debate in this despicable fashion.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman has been speaking for over three hours. I pay a great tribute to him for being mostly in order throughout that period. However, it has been indicated that a number of his hon. Friends and also a number of Opposition Members wish to take part in the debate. I hope, therefore, that he will not overdo it. That would be a pity.

Mr. Nell Hamilton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you could confirm that as there is no time limit on this debate, unless the closure is moved, there should be no difficulty in allowing all hon. Members who wish to take part to do so.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know about closures. These are purely hypothetical matters. Naturally, I wish to call as many hon. Members as possible who wish to speak. I cannot do that if speeches go on for a very long time.

Mr. Michael Brown: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have just indicated that my hon. and learned Friend is now into the fourth hour of his speech. I wonder whether you might consider briefly suspending the sitting to enable my hon. and learned Friend to have a glass of water, bearing in mind that London water is not fluoridated and that he could probably do with a glass of water during a short suspension of the sitting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. and learned Gentleman is indicating dissent. If he wants a glass of water, I think that one of his hon. Friends will bring one.

Mr. Fairbairn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was not my understanding that in proceedings of this kind hon. Members who wished to catch your eye should come to the Chair in order to do so. If my hon. and learned Friend wants a glass of water, which in London has already passed through 14 other filthily fluoridated people, he can have one. However, I thought the tradition was that when we were dealing with amendments we did not come to the Chair in order to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Coming to the Chair is a procedure which naturally I deprecate. Catching the Speaker's eye is the right of hon. Members. However, in the position that I occupy I can sense when other hon. Members wish to take part in a debate.

Mr. Best: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to detain the House, but it may be that my right hon. and learned Friend can assist the House. I remember that he came to the Dispatch Box earlier this morning and said that after we had debated this series of amendments it might be appropriate for the Government to consider reporting further progress. If that were to be the case, it would be of great assistance to us and, I suspect, to the whole House.

Mr. Speaker: I know nothing about that.

Mr. Lawrence: I am most grateful for the concern for me that has been shown by hon. Members and yourself, Mr. Speaker. I dare not take any water because I am not sure how many friends I have left around this place. Although I am surrounded by a coterie of friends, even though some of them do not share my views on this subject, I am afraid that my eyesight is failing and I cannot see just how far back their serried ranks spread, and since I have a feeling that the water would come from that end I shall pass that one by, not pass the water, but pass the offer by. That reminds me, Mr. Speaker, that at some stage there is another function in which I might like to engage.

The thought that I might be flagging and would therefore need sustenance is wide of the mark because I am now getting into second if not third gear. It would be a bad thing to stop the momentum which has been building up behind me.

In response to you, Mr. Speaker, and your kind thoughts, and your observation that I have stuck pretty much to the terms of the amendment, I say that I have been most careful about that. If occasionally I have erred it has been only as a result of some temptation which has been lowered into my sights. I have been most careful to try to keep to the subject of safety. I realise that I shall disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn by only barely touching that part of the subject which is most dear to his heart—the lack of safety for the people who have to handle fluoride and the processes by which that is done.

I hope that we may be able to come to those matters in a later amendment on a later day. I cannot think that there will be many people here at 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock this afternoon who will want to hear me speaking, although I may be able to manage that.

It is not any desire to hear my own voice that motivates me—in fact, I cannot stand the sound of it—nor is it any desire to entertain my hon. Friends who I am sure can be entertained in a much better way. It is, first, a desire to try to put on the record as many of the facts as possible so that the people in this country and hon. Members who know nothing about health matters may at least have the opportunity to see that there is another side to the subject. Unless we were to postulate that every one of the 10s, 20s or 100s of scientists who have produced properly analysed and written up scientific work are all lunatics, crazy, nuts or idiots, then there may be something in the anti-fluoridation case.

The second reason why I am continuing is that I am afraid that I am, although not very old, sufficiently long in the tooth in this place to be able to trust my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench not to move the closure of the debate the moment that I sit down.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall give way to my right hon. and learned Friend in a moment. If I could have an assurance that if I were to sit down within the next hour or two my right hon. and hon. Friends would allow my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, and any other hon. Friend who has a positive contribution to make about some of the aspects of these amendments, the opportunity to make it, I should gladly finish by, say 9.45 am.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) was putting him under pressure to come to a conclusion. I should not wish to join that. To enable my hon. and learned Friend to pace the remaining points of his speech to which he is now moving, I must tell him that I have a Standing Committee to go to at 10.30 am. That need not force him to rush through his concluding remarks, but it means that if he is still on his feet at that time he will probably have to have a reply from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Health and Social Security. He will have to rely on the scarcely legible notes that I have been keeping copiously for the past two or three hours. It would be a wrench to leave the debate and go to the Standing Committee because I am led to believe that a filibuster is planned there, and I should much prefer to take part in this pertinent and closely argued debate on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Golding: Will the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) give way?

Mr. Lawrence: Yes.

Mr. Golding: It matters not if the Minister is missing or if the Under-Secretary of State responds. I could read the speech of the Under-Secretary of State. He has only one speech to make in reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton. It would be simple for any hon. Member to read that speech at any time. We know the speech that will come from the Dispatch Box, whether it is read by the Minister or the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be for the benefit of the whole House if the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) were allowed to continue his speech without too many interruptions.

Mr. Lawrence: I hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, for saying that I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). I can add to his statement by saying that there is no point in my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister being here, not only because we know what he will say, but because he may not have listened to a word I have said. He may occasionally out of friendship have listened to me. He listened but his ears were closed. It has become the pattern of this discussion that the ears of Ministers are all too often closed. If that were not the case, some concession would be made to the views of a long list of scientists, medical researchers, professors, Nobel prizewinners, lawyers and judges who have said that it is wrong to put fluoride in the water at a level of one part per million. One can assume that there is a solid wall of those who think that fluoride is perfectly safe. That can only mean that Ministers are not listening. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will not be insulted by my saying that it does not matter whether he, his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State or another hon. Friend is present or whether the Government wind up a wooden man and put him in the

[Mr. Lawrence]

Dispatch Box to spout what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has been reported in *Hansard* as saying.

There is no point in my standing here unless I proceed with the argument. I therefore move to the race, age and sex analysis of Burk and Yiamouyiannis. They examined fluoridated Birmingham, because Birmingham is the jewel in the crown of the fluoridated areas of Britain. We hear that the poor dentists of Birmingham have had so little to do since 1974, when the water was fluoridated, that they had to look elsewhere for patients and that that is proof positive that fluoridation is a great success in reducing dental caries. Because the analysts have no evidence—not that they have looked for any—that more people in Birmingham than anywhere else have died since fluoridation, Birmingham is, therefore, said to be the safest place in the world.

If one wants to find out why I am motivated to make speeches of such length on a subject that bores me silly when I have much better things to do, one needs go no further than examine the information that has come from Birmingham. It is claimed that the caries rate in Birmingham has fallen tremendously. It has; but the caries rate has fallen tremendously in a number of other parts of Britain where there is no fluoride in the water. The conclusion of scientists and dentists saying, "Post hoc ergo propter hoc" is a load of rubbish. We all learnt when we did logic or during our sixth form classes that that was a fallacy. It is proven here to be a fallacy.

8.30 am

That is what is wrong with so much of the so-called pseudo-science of the pro-fluoridationists. They will say what happened from the moment the place was fluoridated to now, but they can seldom say what happened in the run-up to fluoridation. One of the reasons why they are so hateful of the Burk and Yiamouyiannis research is that it actually stretched back to before the fluoridated areas were assessed.

That is not all. The fluoridationists are not above a little jiggery pokery with the figures. It is true that anaesthetics for dental treatment in Birmingham have been wiped out and that some of the figures indicate a substantial reduction in dental caries. What was the position in regard to the decay of children's teeth in the first 12 years after 1964? It is in the first 12 years of life that fluoride is supposed to help children's teeth.

Mr. Fairbairn: Nine years.

Mr. Lawrence: Well, nine to 12. It is not so much use after that. Its main effect is in the first 12 years. After that, if it is continued, it is said to be beneficial. The figures show that for temporary teeth, that is, the teeth that the children lose, there was a threefold increase in fillings over the first 12 years when the fluoride was supposed to be working on the children's teeth. With permanent teeth there was no decrease in fillings. As one statistician from the Royal Society interpreted the figures, there was no good effect from fluoride—there may even have been a bad effect—on children's teeth in the years when there should have been an effect. That was a scientific assessment of the figures. I do not know whether that is right or wrong; I am not fitted to make that kind of judgment. All I pass on to the House is what statisticians and medical people have said—that the figures do not bear out the boast.

I took part in a debate on fluoridation at a dental school—a debate which we won, incidentally, against a lot of students in their last year who had been told by their professors that fluoridation was good. A professor said candidly to me, "We are a little worried about the figures that are cropping up in other parts of the country like the Isle of Wight where there are massive reductions in caries in children's teeth which has nothing to do with the fluoridation of water because the water there is not fluoridated." That reduction had taken place perhaps because of the consumption of fewer sweets, the greater use of toothbrushes and even the use of fluoridated toothpaste. What one knows is that it had nothing to do with fluoridated water, since there was not any.

It is a little ingenious in this day and age to attribute every reduction in dental caries in children's teeth to fluoride in the water when we all know as young parents what pressure there is upon us from dentists, from doctors, from the media and from what we read to make sure that our children eat sensible food, brush their teeth regularly and go to the dentist before too much trouble manifests itself. One can have anecdotal experience both ways, but many people whom I know report much better teeth in their children than they enjoyed when they were children, although they live in non-fluoridated areas.

Mr. Fairbairn: As my hon. and learned Friend will know, many dentists say that they favour fluoridation. If their recommendation was accurate, it would depress their incomes. I have never heard of a dentist anxious to depress his income. It is claimed by all scientists, and would not be disputed by the supine Minister were he listening—I have given him a new adjective—that fluoride causes brittleness in teeth which increases with age, thus causing teeth to break and to fall out as one reaches the massive age of 30. I do not know whether my hon. and learned Friend has figures to cover those matters, but, as I understand it, that is the undisputed effect of one part per million of fluoride in water, even if it could be controlled by Hush-Puppy Ministers to that level. Even if it could be controlled, the undisputed evidence of all scientists is that, whatever it may do for the teeth of children aged under nine, it makes the teeth of older people more brittle and likely to crack, break off and fall out. Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that that is the reason why dentists are so happy to support fluoridation?

Mr. Lawrence: I can certainly confirm from my reading that the effects of fluoride may be as my hon. and learned Friend describes. I have no personal knowledge of that, but it is the view of scientists, academics, professors and the important people who busy themselves with such matters. As to whether it is one reason why dentists are so much in favour of fluoride, I take leave to doubt my hon. and learned Friend. First, many dentists support the anti-fluoridation case. Secondly, most of the dentists who support the pro-fluoridation case do so only because they take their lead from the British Dental Association, which takes its lead from the Royal College of Physicians, whose report is very out of date, as those who attended the opening part of the debate will have heard me say.

Thirdly, the most highly fluoridated country in the world is the United States, although the amount of

artificial fluoridation of the water supply is shrinking, because, during the past four or five years, hundreds of towns have come off fluoride. America, which is still the most fluoridated country in the world, still shows the greatest increase in tooth decay and in dentists. There is an argument for saying that the more fluoride is put into the water, the more dentists there are.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Before my hon. Friend leaves the Burk and Yiamouyiannis report, I am anxious that he should deal with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton North (Mr. Marlow) before the solicitude of my hon. Friends, who interrupted proceedings about half an hour ago. He will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North drew attention to the analysis of the Burk and Yiamouyiannis report by age, sex and race. He was particularly interested in the racial aspects. Is there any evidence to show that the effects of fluoridating the water supply affect one race to a greater extent than another? Could that be an aspect of discrimination against races in Britain? Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend would inform the House of the results of the analysis by race that was carried out. Was it done on the basis of parts per million of pigmentation, for example, and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is continually interrupted—one might say fed—with further thoughts, he is likely to lose the thread of the excellent speech that he is making. It also means that hon. Members who wish to speak later may be denied an opportunity to do so. I hope, therefore, that the hon. and learned Member will be allowed to get on with his speech without interruption.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful for that compliment, Mr. Speaker, and I assure you that I will not be deflected.

I should be grateful for an indication from the Minister that the debate will not be closured the moment I sit down. If I knew that hon. Members who wish to contribute will be permitted to do so without the closure being moved, I would be happy to curtail my speech. When I last put that question to the Minister, no answer was forthcoming.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I have no wish to go down the road I was invited to travel by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). I know only one race—the human race—and I am not interested in any variations of pigmentation of people's skin.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thought that you might like to be made aware of the fact that my hon. and learned Friend has made the longest speech in the House this century.

Mr. Speaker: I doubt whether that is true. I seem to remember the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) making a very long speech. However, I hope that we are not in the business of breaking records. This place is about logical, sound debate and winning the argument. The hon. and learned Member for Burton is doing well and I suggest that he be allowed to get on with his speech without interruption.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful for your remarks, Mr. Speaker. The record to which my hon. Friend referred is not one that I should like to carry with me for the rest of my days. It would not have been so long had I not given way so many times to hon. Members on both sides who thought that they were helping me, whereas they only helped me to establish a record of which I am not particularly proud, a record that I hope will speedily be broken in our debates on this measure, perhaps by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, of whom we have great hopes.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I have listened with interest to references to previous records. When I spoke from the Back Benches and made the longest speech since 1828, I did so in defence of the safety of a community of some 30,000 souls. My hon. and learned Friend may be proud of his achievement today, but the result, if he has his way, will be to deny dental health to the children of this country and, by definition, to the whole of the nation of the future. That is a big distinction. He may be proud of it. I am not.

Mr. Lawrence: I am speaking in defence of the safety of 55 million people. If my right hon. Friend had not only recently entered the Chamber—I think that he has not been in his place for more than five minutes of the many hours that we have been debating these matters—and had he listened to the debate, he might have felt some modesty and might not have intervened in such an outrageous, outlandish and over-the-top manner, which is quite uncharacteristic of my right hon. Friend, whom I love and admire.

8.45 am

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: As my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has not heard all the evidence which my hon. and learned Friend has put before us and has not had the chance to be convinced by it, perhpas my hon. and learned Friend could provide him with a summary of the four hours of his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): It is only five minutes since Mr. Speaker said that he was anxious to hear the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and that interventions were taking him away from the amendment.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not welcome further interventions. I understand that my hon. Friends may think that I am more tired than I feel. I can assure them that I am now going into third gear and that there are two more gears in my body before I reach top, or aerobic drive. I have no need of sustenance but I am most grateful to those who thought that I might have.

When we discussed these matters previously in the Chamber, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health referred, to my great surprise, to the 11-year study in support of the proposition that no harm was discovered in areas of fluoridation, especially Birmingham. I was surprised that he did so because the report has been dead and buried for a long time. It has been surpassed by masses of other evidence of harm and some evidence of benefit. It can now be said to be water under the bridge, and that is one reason why it is dead and buried.

The main reason for that happening is that it contained a message which was unwelcome to the pro-fluoridationists. The message was not that fluoridation reduced dental caries in teeth by 50 per cent. or by a massive percentage. The message was — I have an extract from the report in my hand — that the only beneficial effect of fluoridation was to delay the onset of dental caries in children's teeth between the ages of eight and 11 years—it may have been children between the

[Mr. Lawrence]

ages of 11 and 14 years—by two years. In other words, fluoride did no good except to delay the arrival of the caries, and that as soon as the age limit had been exceeded the individual reverted to the same rate of decay. That happened only two years later than would have been his misfortune had there been no fluoride in the water.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. I think that I would be irritating those about me, and certainly Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I were to do so. I do not intend to take interventions at this moment. I shall indicate to my hon. Friend when I wish to take interventions, but at the moment I do not.

It was a great surprise to me to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health resurrect the 11-year report. It is the one study that no one can dispute for its thoroughness, care and scientific approach. It shows only that dental caries in children's teeth between the ages that I have mentioned is delayed.

Mr. Fairbairn: May be delayed.

Mr. Lawrence: If we take the report at its highest, dental caries is delayed by two years. The difference is 2·1 years or 2·4, which is minimal. Let us take the risk of dying from cancer or from many other diseases, because we shall be able to save half of one decayed or missing tooth in our childhood! Of course, the figures may be wrong.

The 11-year study might be a load of rubbish, but it is interesting that the Minister has been advised to resurrect it. It is obviously not considered to be a load of rubbish. Even if it is rubbish, it shows how dangerous scientists are. In 1969 they say one thing and, a few years later, they say another, and bury the original report because it is inconvenient. I remember going to a seminar where nobody had heard of the 11-year study. Scientific fashion is cyclical. That is what we should worry about before we legislate for the permanent addition of fluoride to the drinking water of people who do not want it, do not need it and cannot possibly benefit from it and to whom it might well be dangerous.

Another of the nuts, the cranks, the crazy people——

Mr. Fairbairn: The idiots.

Mr. Lawrence: —the idiots, happens to be the retired chief dental officer in Auckland, New Zealand, Mr. John Colquhoun, who went on a world tour to find evidence of the benefit of fluoridation to teeth. He always favoured fluoridation but is now reviled and condemned as a charlatan, a crank, a nut and an idiot. I think that my right hon. and learned Friend called him an idiot the other day. He certainly said that his report was idiotic. Why? The man was perfectly acceptable to the establishment until he went on his tour and reported:

"I found on my study tour that new better designed research was under way, which I reported to the health department on my return and which I, along with other believers in fluoridation, hoped would finally prove the superiority of fluoridation over other methods of prevention. But the results of this research, though often presented in guarded and ambiguous ways, have not supported the case for fluoridation at all. They show that dental decay rates have dropped dramatically in most developed countries whether they practise fluoridation or not, and in fluoridated countries it dropped in unfluoridated places as well. Also, in the European countries which discontinued fluorida some years ago, there are no reports of an increase in de decay as a result."

One of the greatest pieces of nonsense that I have he today was my right hon. and learned Friend trying to ar that fluoridation was spreading throughout the wo Perhaps he will be good enough to tell us the name some of the countries, with about 50 people in th which are fluoridating water. No European country ex Eire and the United Kingdom fluoridates water. I interesting that West Germany, Holland and Sweden h stopped fluoridating.

I do not want to take up the time of the House remin hon. Members of what I said in our previous debate s time last week—it seems a million years ago. W have countries of any size stopped fluoridating? bureaucrats in the DHSS say it is because those coun are worried about freedom and political pressures. W asked whether it is anything to do with safety they "No, no, no, no, no." If there is any hint of safety pla a part in the decision, we are told that those countries h been advised by cranks, charlatans, knaves and——

Mr. Fairbairn: Idiots.

Mr. Lawrence: Precisely.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. De Speaker. I know that it is early in the morning, but in order for hon. Members of the feminine nature to their chests as advertisement boards for the Trent Mersey carnal society?

Mr. Lawrence: I will not have any evil said of Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Derbysh South (Mrs. Currie). Whether she finds my hon. learned Friend attractive is a matter of taste. The only or flaw in her character and personality is her suppor the mass medication of the public water supply.

In response to the hon. Member for Newcastle-un Lyme who complained that all that I was doing sketching in and that I did not go into any detail, I repair the omission by giving more detail. I shall read fully the important summary of John Colquhoun the dental adviser for Auckland, New Zealand, discredited as a result of his lack of success at proving fluoridation worldwide was a good thing. It says:

"Evidence that there is now no dental benefit related to fluoridation. The Health Department's own statistics show water fluoridation is not related to any significant differenc child dental health. Statistics from Auckland Health Di indicate

(a) children's filling rates are related to the income l of the suburbs where they live and not to fluorida

(b) fluoridation merely accelerates temporarily a decli dental decay which was occurring anyway.

Statistics from the Greater Auckland region, that is health districts containing over a quarter of New Zeal population, show:

(1) where any unfluoridated area is compared w fluoridated area of similar income level, the perce of children who are free of dental decay is consist higher in the unfluoridated area.

(2) As well as the above, decayed, missing and filled scores show, when socio-economic difference allowed, child dental health is better in unfluoridated area.

What my hon. and learned Friend was saying t House is right. If anything, teeth are better in unfluoridated areas than in the fluoridated areas, probably for a good reason. If there is fluoride in the w there is that less pressure on the parents to enforce a re

of teeth brushing and teeth care on their children. The water will look after it, just as the state will look after the education of our children and the care of the old, and we do not have to bother about it.

The trouble with not bothering about dental care is that if fluoride does not improve the teeth, and is harmful, as so many scientists in the world seem to think, then my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has got the boot on the wrong foot. I am saving the health of the nation, and he is the one, by virtue of his support for fluoridation, who is helping to weaken it.

This is only a summary of John Colquhoun's report. I resist the temptation to read the full text. It says:

"4) The Health Department's collected statistics, as well as controlled surveys, show that the above is true for the rest of New Zealand also.

5) Early fluoridation research in the 1940s and 1950s was very defective. New and better research, which I noted on my world study tour for the Department of Health in 1980; which has since been published, shows that in most developed countries, dental decay has declined whether fluoridation was practised or not. In the countries in Europe which discontinued fluoridation some years ago, there have been no reports of an increase in dental decay as a result."

If fluoride in the water is so good for children's teeth, why has there been no increase in dental decay in any of the countries in which fluoride was added to the water but has now ceased to be added? One is driven to the conclusion that the whole campaign is bogus, that fluoride does not improve children's teeth and that, if one removes it, children's teeth do not deteriorate.

"New Zealand has an excellent dental service, and all children can receive regular surface applications of fluoride to their teeth. There is a continuing scientific debate about fluoridation with many scientists strongly disputing that fluoridation is perfectly safe and effective, as the health department claims."

9 am

Here is the chief dental officer, pro-fluoridation, being sent, at the state's expense no doubt, to bring back world evidence of the benefits of fluoridation, who says that many scientists strongly dispute that fluoridation is perfectly safe and effective, as the New Zealand authorities claim.

"If fluoridation in the food chain is a benefit in unfluoridated areas, as the health department claims, it must be above optimal in fluoridated areas."

That point has been laboured at some length in the course of my remarks.

"Evidence of chronic fluoride intoxication related to water fluoridation: First, Auckland school dental nurses and I observed and reported high levels of dental fluorosis—chronic fluoride intoxication—among children in the fluoridated areas, some of it disfiguring, but not in unfluoridated areas. Read carefully, the health department report, which claimed to discredit these findings, supports them. From around the world, there are reports of an increase in dental fluorosis. International scientific literature supports our claim that what the health department calls diffuse white opacities is dental fluorosis; so do the results of the recent survey initiated by the health department. Recent scientific evidence has increased the credibility of earlier claims of harm from low fluoride intakes."

I shall not burden the House further with the remainder of the summary of the report. There are two possibilities only. One is that this man is a nut, a lunatic, a crank and an idiot. The other is that he is a perfectly sane, balanced, reasonable, observing dental officer. If he is the former, it is strange that for a considerable number of years he should have been employed by the Auckland health department and his lunacy, his absurdity, his crankiness and his idiocy should have gone undetected until the moment when he went roaming the world to try to uncover such evidence as he wanted to find—that was his brief, and that is what he believed in—that fluoridation was safe. That seems to be a somewhat far-fetched consideration—at any rate, it is uncanny.

The earliest moment at which he was detected as being insane—the kind of person who wanted to hurt and harm the poor young people in the various countries of the world who would benefit from painless teeth if only there was fluoride in the water—the very first moment at which this blinding light of revelation descended upon the authorities was the moment at which he came back with the report which stated that fluoride was unsafe, unnecessary, unpleasant and should be stopped.

I wish to deal next with the extent of the Burk and Yiamouyiannis report which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. It was ascertained beyond any peradeventure that the report had been weighted for age, race and sex, and findings were made by three courts of law. In fact, I think that two of the court decisions came after recognition of age, race and sex, but the timing does not matter now. Three courts of law in America have accepted the Burk-Yiamouyiannis findings. Conclusions were reached about Birmingham.

If anything motivated me to this campaign in general, and to this speech in particular, it was the deception about Birmingham. I say that in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South in whose constituency I have the pleasure to live. She has been taken in. It is sad that those who are taken in never stay to listen to the reasoned arguments. I understand. It takes time and I apologise, but the case cannot be presented in a short time.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend did not seek to intervene. He has done sterling service throughout the night—which is more than I can say for my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South, who has been getting her beauty sleep.

Mr. McGuire: The hon. and learned Gentleman has referred to a matter of vital importance. He had an abundance of evidence in Committee and he hardly touched some of it. Will he not skip the detail, but educate those whom he accuses of not staying to hear the argument? If he discussed the matter in depth, I am sure that he would convert fluoridaters to our view.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Makerfield for his confidence in me. I have modest views about my powers in this matter and I do not wish to labour my views at length. I hope those who have stayed with me through the night will understand that my main motivating force is to put the anti-fluoridation case clearly on the record for everyone to see and to stop us rushing headlong into the mass medication of our population.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has been of sterling value throughout the night. I pay a tribute. Not only is my hon. and learned Friend a man of distinction and authority in politics and the law, but he is extremely knowledgeable about medicine—and, I believe, trained. He has been of great value to hon. Members on all sides of the argument. His interventions have been mostly—although not always—constructive. They have always

[Mr. Lawrence]

been amusing and frequently they have added to our fund of knowledge about the details with which mere politicians and lawyers cannot come to grips.

Yiamouyiannis and Burk examined Birmingham and what did they see?

Mr. Marlow: The Bull ring.

Mr. Lawrence: This is not a matter for humour because they discovered something very sad. The reaction of the authorities to what they found was even more sad.

In fluoridated Birmingham they noticed that there was an 8·2-fold increase in the cancer death rate against a 1·5-fold increase in non-fluoridated Manchester's cancer death rate. That was the case although, before fluoridation was begun in Birmingham, Manchester's cancer death rate was the higher of the two cities.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be that Labour Members need their breakfast but is it necessary for them to pass it around among themselves? Were they to do so, would it not be in order for them to offer you some and perhaps Conservative Members as well?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no doubt that hon. Members have taken in what has been said. I had not noticed anything untoward.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There has been constant reference in the proceedings to the fact that the Minister takes cough drops. We, too, need our cough drops.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that assistance.

Let me repeat the figures again, because they are important. There was an 8·2-fold increase in cancer deaths in Birmingham — *[Interruption.]* — as against only a 1·5-fold increase — *[Interruption.]* — in non-fluoridated Manchester's cancer death rate, although before the fluoridation was begun in Birmingham, Manchester's death rate—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I cannot hear what my hon. and learned Friend is saying. Not only is the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) using her chest to advertise, she is also rabbitting on in such a way as to prevent me hearing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I could hear the hon. and learned Member quite clearly.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could not hear my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is rabbitting on. It is difficult to hear from my position.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not want to repeat——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There may be those in the Chamber who would rather hear my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) than my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That may be because some people prefer to listen to rubbish rather than sense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the House woul well advised to get back to the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Deputy Speaker. As my hon. Friend the Membe Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) obviously has somet to say, because she has been saying it at great le behind my left ear for the past 20 minutes or so, wo be in order for my hon. and learned Friend the Me for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) to give way so that she can the House the benefit of her comments?

Mr. Lawrence: If my hon. Friend the Membe Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will allow me to do remaining quiet for a moment, I can relay what s saying. While I was describing to the House according to the Burk and Yiamouyiannis study, ther been an 8·2-fold increase in Birmingham at the same as there had been a 1·5-fold—*[Interruption.]*—inc over the same period in Manchester, although the c death rate had been higher there before fluoridation b my hon. Friend was saying that that was nothi *[Interruption.]*—to do with fluoride but was to do w polluted atmosphere——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Membe Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is still rabbitting on very difficult to hear. Will you ask her to shut up listen? She might then learn something.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the Chair to decide another hon. Member is out of order.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend the Membe Derbyshire, South says that that is nothing to do fluoride, that it is to do with pollution of the atmosp and cigarettes. She will correct me if I am wrong.

Mrs. Currie: And half a dozen other things as

Mr. Lawrence: If my hon. Friend catches your Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to hear what thos Meanwhile, all that I can do is analyse the explanations that she has given. If she had taken the to listen to what I have just said, she would have n that Manchester had the higher of the cancer death before Birmingham was fluoridated.

Mrs. Currie: Perhaps they all moved to Birmin

Mr. Lawrence: Now we have the addition, "Pe they all moved to Birmingham." This is important.

9.15 am

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. D Speaker. I am trying to listen to a speech. I seem listening to a conversation between my hon. and le Friend who has the Floor, and the hon. Lady, who not have the Floor. I am trying to listen to a speech I do not want to listen to a conversation.

Mr. Lawrence: I think that this interchange be my hon. Friend and me is very useful. It shows ho fluoridationists think, or do not think, and it show they behave to anti-fluoridationists who are trying a case with evidence.

My hon. Friend's first response was that the reas pollution. Her second response was that it was ci smoking. Her third response, when I said that fluoridation Manchester had the higher cancer dea

of Birmingham and Manchester, was that they must have all moved to Birmingham. There is a lesson in that. First, my hon. Friend does not want to hear what the facts are. Secondly, when the facts are explained to her, she simply turns a deaf ear and does not listen. She is a very bright lady. What did not allow to sink in is the fact that Manchester had a higher cancer death rate before Birmingham was fluoridated, which shows that, whatever it was that gave Manchester a higher cancer death rate before, it may have been pollution or it may have been cigarette smoking, but those elements were equally present in Manchester and Birmingham before Birmingham was fluoridated.

The increase in Birmingham is substantial—8·2-fold, and even if the figure is 100 per cent. wrong, it is still many times the increase in cancer death that there was in Manchester. My hon. Friend has some explaining to do —how in the face of such figures, she can both not listen to the figures being explained——

Mrs. Currie: But I am.

Mr. Lawrence: —or if she listens, not bother to take them in, or if she does bother to take them in, try to laugh them away by saying that the people in Manchester all moved to Birmingham—*[Interruption.]*—and took with them their cancer death rate, and that that is the reason why the rate has risen. *[Interruption.]* I think that the House will draw its own conclusion because the essence of the debate——

Mr. Fairbairn: It is a very difficult matter for those of us who are trying to listen to my hon. and learned Friend. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) appears to be totally incapable of shutting her mouth. I do not mind whether that is a capability that she does or does not have, but it is very disturbing to the debate when she constantly attempts to correct my hon. and learned Friend during his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) really wants to intervene, she should stand and catch my eye.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) does not want to intervene——

Mr. Marlow: Then she should shut up.

Mr. Lawrence: One can assume only that my hon. Friend has nothing constructive to say about the matter. It is self-evident to any objective person in the House, is it not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if there are two cities, both heavily urbanised, both heavily populated, in the midlands area of England, both of which had a roughly comparable —but Manchester had the greater—cancer death rate before fluoridation, and then there is fluoridation, and the cancer death rate in Birmingham goes up alarmingly while Manchester's barely rises at all——

Mrs. Currie: It has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Lawrence: —it may conceivably be that the explanation is the same as the explanation in the 20 largest cities in the United States of America——

Mrs. Currie: And it may not.

Mr. Lawrence: —and the same as the explanation would be seen to be, if my hon. Friend had been here, as we discussed the countless research inquiries that have brought out the results that fluoride is detrimental to health and may cause cancer. It may even be possible that cancer has been caused by the fluoridation of Birmingham.

The objections that have been thrown at the Yiamouyiannis and Burk analysis have got nothing to do with more pollution in Birmingham, or with more cigarette smoking in Birmingham, or with those in Manchester who are prone to cancer coming to Birmingham. The attack on Yiamouyiannis and Burk is, as it always has been and always will be, that they have not weighted the figures for age, race and sex.

Mrs. Currie: That makes no difference.

Mr. Lawrence: It will be shown that they——

Mrs. Currie: Absolute nonsense.

Mr. Lawrence: —are opposed by mindless, ceaseless chattering——

Mrs. Currie: My hon. and learned Friend must watch whom he calls mindless.

Mr. Lawrence: —of people who are deaf to the arguments——

Mrs. Currie: Nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must stop providing a running commentary on the speech of the hon. and learned Gentleman. If she wants to address the House, she must stand up and catch my eye.

Mr. Lawrence: That is how it will always be. One simply cannot penetrate to those who will not hear.

In response to the criticism of the non-weighting by age, race and sex Yiamouyiannis and Burk have been through all the figures again. I have charts and pages of detail which, if I wished to prolong the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would read out so that they were on the record. Instead I shall read out only two conclusions. The first relates to the conclusion which Dr. Burk has reached with regard to Birmingham:

"Upon fluoridation of the Birmingham public water supply in October 1964 its population of approximately 1 million showed one of the most abrupt documentable increases in the observed cancer death rate of any large city in the world, far greater than reported for any non-fluoridated English city such as Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol, Manchester, Coventry, Bradford, Sheffield, Greater London, et cetera, or any of 20 previously studied large American cities, whether fluoridated or not."

In a summary of responses to the criticisms in the Knox report of 10 February 1985, Yiamouyiannis and Burk said:

"You can have it either way. You can have it weighted for age, race and sex, with standardised mortality ratios, or you can have it not weighted for age, race and sex, or you can have it not weighted for age, race and sex without standardised mortality ratios. However you want to arrange it, you come back in the end to a very substantial increase in cancer deaths in Birmingham following fluoridation which is not observed in Manchester or any non-fluoridated city in the country."

I want to read the details, with or without standardising adjustments for the factors of age, sex and race:

"There is a large increase in the cancer death rate trends in the ten largest fluoridated American central cities compared to an equivalent matched ten cities that were not fluoridated. The increase amounted to 31·5 excess cancer deaths per 100,000 population over the period of 1950 to 1970 in the unadjusted data, and after standardisating adjustment by conventional methods the adjusted excess still amounted to the large value of 21·8 cancer deaths per 100,000 population over the period of 1950 to 1970. In short, standardising adjustments for age, sex and race reduced the observed cancer death rate trend by only 30·8, not 100 per cent., leaving 69·2 per cent. thereof ascribable to artificial fluoridation, clearly harmful to human health in terms of increased cancer mortality alone."

[Mr. Lawrence]

That is what they said only last month about the American figures.

Those who made that report have been upheld in their veracity, in their integrity and in the depth of their scientific research by three courts of law in the United States of America which found their case to be sufficiently proved. It is a matter of very great regret that, faced with figures of that kind, all that the pro-fluoridation lobby, as represented by my hon. and very dear Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South can do is to mutter, not to listen, to pour scorn and, when invited to give a response, to fail to do so. That, I am afraid, sums up, does it not, the whole picture of this fluoridation debate?

To begin with, the pro-fluoridation lobby says that no one in their right mind can be against fluoridation. It then says that in so far as there is anyone against fluoridation they are lunatics, nuts, cranks and—[HON MEMBERS: "Idiots."]—In so far as the product of their research is laboratory tested, showing that tumours are caused by ingestion of fluoride into animal and human cells; in so far as there is epidemiological evidence, if we take whole cities and study them, that there is harm; in so far as there is medical or scientific evidence that, for example, fluoride locks up calcium and thereby causes heart and bone afflictions; in so far as there is evidence that fluoride is massively cumulative in the system and does not pass out at anything like the extent necessary for safety; in so far as it accumulates in the ligaments, bones and muscles, causing some of the worst ageing illnesses in our society; in so far as it inhibits the enzymes, in particular, the repair enzymes, there is an explanation as to how it happens. In so far as there is now evidence about hydrogen bonding which works in live yeast cells, that is positive evidence that fluoride is dangerous, as it has never been known to be before in live cells. All that evidence is rubbish. It is all adduced by charlatans, knaves, idiots, cranks—[HON MEMBERS: "Idiots."] I have said idiots.

It does not matter how many Nobel prize winners, professors, lecturers, mathematicians, statisticians and dentists affirm the evil of fluoridation—it is safe. There is no doubt about that, and we cannot understand how every country in Europe except Eire and the United Kingdom has stopped fluoridating or has never fluoridated.

I have been scrupulously careful to confine my remarks during the few minutes that I have been addressing the House to safety and benefit. The larger audience that has gathered here after breakfast came in no doubt expecting to see a man on his knees dripping with perspiration, hardly able to open his mouth, still less dressed ready for battle in the courts. It will be bitterly disappointed because at last we have managed to get on the record a fair amount —not all by any means—of the somewhat limited exposition of the case—I apologise for limiting it—against the ridiculous assertions of complete safety and benefit, which are not made out in the scientific evidence.

I have not talked about freedom, dealt with in the other amendments in this group, the safety of people who handle equipment——

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside) *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall give way to my hon. Friend because he shares a room with me.

Mr. Colvin: The fact that I share a room with my and learned Friend establishes a special bond betwe He has referred to the case that he must defen morning. I offer this advice to him in the best and helpful way. I warn him that the traffic is bad. appearing at the Old Bailey in about half an ho dressed up in his gear. If he is deciding to embark a new argument, it might best be kept until next ti

9.30 am

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend commiserations. I was hoping that my hon. Frie Member for Derbyshire, South would give me a shave before I left the building and set foot in public matter would have been negotiated. I think that my Friend is a little angry with me—that can on because she has not listened to any of my argume she had done so, she would have been pleased wi because she would at last have been drawn from he sided preoccupation with and unjustified suppo evidence not borne out by the facts.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. and l Friend. I take the opportunity to compliment and him for his stalwart performance during the debate

Mr. Fairbairn: I would not be competent to ta hon. and learned Friend's place at the Old B because, of all the people from member states Common Market, the only person who cannot be ca appear in English courts is a Scotsman.

I want to advise my hon. and learned Friend, b he is clearly upset by my hon. Friend the Memb Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). My hon. Frie offered to stuff me full of water when I am spread on the Floor of the House. I should have thought my hon. Friend lay down, rather than sat down, she even do that for him.

Mr. Lawrence: I knew that I could count on m and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kin raise the level of my peroration, which otherwise have been indescribably dull. I was referring to fre and freedom is dull. The freedom of the individ choose for himself whether this poison will be thrus his throat—whether or not he needs it or want whether it is good or bad for him—is the t freedom in respect of which the House has already s pass. I hope that we shall consider the harm d fluoride to the infrastructure. This debate is oc within days of the time when my right hon. Frie Chancellor of the Exchequer has to consider whe spend our money on tax cuts or the infrastructur harm done to pipes not only in people's houses but i production plants and the streets where the pipes and much corrosion occurs should be considered my right hon. Friend the Chancellor delivers his spe 19 March.

My hon. Friends who have been with me sta during the night and those who have been and gon and gone and come back again will not credit the f I have touched on only a small part of the case again medication.

Mr. Golding: May I say first in the presence of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir. B. Braine) that I was present to hear his carefully constructed and well-delivered intervention.

It has been a pleasure to listen to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). He has made a considerable achievement after a night spent up attending the debate. My grumble is that the hon. and learned Gentleman has not yet dealt with the amendments. Amendment No. 98 states:

"insert 'a compound of fluorine which has been tested and found to be safe to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State'."

We have never seen the Secretary of State during this debate. Let us assume that the Secretary of State gives the job to the Minister of State. How can the hon. and learned Member for Burton advocate that the matter of safety should be given to the Secretary of State or the Minister of State when the hon. and learned Gentleman has spent four hours proving to us that Ministers would not know safety if they fell over it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) has made his point. He should let the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) continue his peroration.

Mr. Lawrence: I am full of sadness that in the few minutes in which I have taken the time of the House to deploy a small fraction of the case against fluoride I have dealt with only one of the five amendments to which I was asked to speak. Perhaps I can now move on to——

Mr. Colvin: The Old Bailey.

Mr. Lawrence: —the Old Bailey.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am afraid I never had the pleasure——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to raise a point of order at this stage, but, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, he spoke to one amendment. The amendment to which he has been speaking deals with the testing of chemicals which would be put in the water supply——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think I have the hon. Gentleman's point. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) moved the amendment. It was for him to make his speech. I have now called the Minister.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No speeches have been made about the other amendments. How is it possible for my right hon. and learned Friend to answer the debate, otherwise the debate has not taken place yet?

Mr. Clarke: As I was about to say, I never had the pleasure of being able to congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on his maiden speech. I now have the pleasure of being able to congratulate him on the first speech he has made of the present length. I hope he will understand if I do not follow the convention with maiden speeches. Although I have sat through his entire speech with pleasure, I hope I am not present when he makes his next speech. Obviously it would not be right for me to inquire into his professional affairs, but I trust a long, hard-fought trial lies ahead of him and not a quick plea of guilty, otherwise I am afraid it is possible that this debate will still be going when he gets back.

I join in the praise to the two masters of the art who have been intervening late in the debate, having helped my hon. and learned Friend throughout. Certainly it was a long speech. I am sure that at least one Opposition Member did not have a beard when the speech started. The speech was exceedingly cogent and well argued. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) came in as he saw his record, established in defence of his constituents some years ago, for the longest speech in the House since, I think, the 1820s, go sailing by.

I regret that my hon. and learned Friend's skills were used as part of an attack upon a Bill which is a valuable preventive health measure which offers great benefits for dental health. I shall address myself to my hon. and learned Friend's arguments. Again I am genuinely sorry that my hon. and learned Friend devoted most of his argument to a repetition of that part of the scientific and medical evidence, as he described it, upon which he so particularly relies. I shall try to avoid repeating the attempts I made before to draw his attention to the vast quantity of scientific and medical evidence that has been produced by more distinguished people than those he cited, many of them in later studies, and many of them financed by the Government who were genuinely seeking to answer the fears stirred by the studies to which he referred.

If my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me, I should like to illustrate the kind of errors which I think he made. He referred extensively to Burk and Yiamouyiannis, well known experts in this subject to that hard coterie of people who stick through the night talking about fluoride in water, which is not a hobby that I expected to take up until recently. Burk and Yiamouyiannis are very familiar names to the aficionados of the subject. They were, I am afraid, heavily rejected by Lord Jauncey in the recent Scottish case after he had heard all the evidence against them.

We commissioned and published a study for the purpose of the Bill, chaired by Professor Alderson in the first place and then by Professor Knox. We brought together all the leading epidemiologists in the country to study the evidence on the fluoridation of water and cancer. A substantial part of the report is devoted to a detailed refutation of Yiamouyiannis and Burk. My hon. and learned Friend, like all the other opponents of the Bill, has never referred to a solitary word of that detailed refutation.

My hon. and learned Friend said that, unlike our judges, three judges in the United States upheld Burk and Yiamouyiannis. I hesitate to say this as he is about to go to the Old Bailey to pursue his distinguished forensic career, but his use of the American authorities was a little lax. I hope that he will be more careful in his citing of precedent when he appears in court this morning. There have been 15 court cases on fluoridation in the United States during the past five years. In 12 of those, fluoridation has been upheld on various grounds. Two appeals are pending, and in a further case in Allegheney, Pennsylvania, an unfavourable first judgment was reversed by a higher court on jurisdictional grounds.

No court of last resort has ever ruled against fluoridation, in the United States, and fluoridation has never been halted in the United States as a result of court judgments. The matter has been taken to the United States Supreme Court at least eight times, and those who agree with my hon. and learned Friend have lost on every occasion. I hope that he will understand why I say that he was a little selective in his evidence when he found three

[Mr. Clarke]

judges—no doubt elected judges in some hick state in the mid-west—who found against fluoridation, and cited them as an authority for rejecting the mass of medical and scientific evidence in this country.

Mr. Lawrence: My right hon. and learned Friend has done less than justice to the point. As a lawyer, he should know that the grounds for appeal were on jurisdiction and the burden of proof; they were nothing to do with the facts. In those three cases, the judges found in favour of the facts on the basis of the evidence and the witnesses who were called on behalf of those who oppose fluoridation. Those cases were presented not simply because they were successful, which shows that there is an analytical doubt, but because the same witnesses gave evidence in those cases as gave evidence before Lord Jauncey.

There is a fair basis for comparison, but even were it not so, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that when three courts of law hear the same witnesses and they come out in favour of the facts which those witnesses state, there must be a doubt about those who say that those witnesses are charlatans, cranks, crazy and idiots, and therefore cannot be relied upon? All that we say is that there is a doubt. Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, in view of the weight of evidence that has been deployed this morning and earlier, there is an overwhelming case for doubt?

Mr. Clarke: Fluoridation has never been halted by a court in the United States. Burk and Yiamouyiannis have been reviewed repeatedly there, we reviewed their evidence in the Knox report, and they have been reviewed in the British courts. My hon. and learned Friend knows where to find detailed arguments refuting the methodology used by Burk and Yiamouyiannis, which is not acceptable.

I shall not go into the arguments about the Japanese studies to which my hon. and learned Friend referred. I attempted to deal with those on Second Reading at column 80 of *Hansard*, when my hon. and learned Friend made precisely the same points. He knows that our advisory committee on mutagenicity is considering the Japanese studies as well as everything else.

My hon. and learned Friend and some of my hon. Friends went into the arguments about the substantial difference between fluoride occurring naturally and fluoride in tap water, trying to attack our argument that all we are doing is increasing the level of fluoride in some areas, or enabling authorities to do so, to bring it to the level that prevails naturally in other areas. He argued that calcium effectively neutralises fluoride. There is no evidence to support that. No epidemiological study shows a difference in effects between areas which have fluoride naturally in their water and those where it is included artificially. High fluoride levels occur naturally both where the water is hard and where it is soft, which means that it has low calcium and magnesium levels. There is no objective evidence to support the assertion about fluoride and calcium.

9.45 am

A study in Quebec was cited with particular care by my hon. and learned Friend, but I regret to say that I have not been able to find the details of that. I can find only four other Canadian studies, all of which came to the flat opposite conclusion to that which he cited. The Quebec study does not appear to carry much weight
There was a stage in 1977 when a morat
declared on a measure that had been passed by
Parliament which had made fluoridation mand

My hon. and learned Friend was right to s
moratorium against mandatory fluoridation ha
ever since. However, municipalities there ren
put fluoride in the water in Quebec. About 750
in Quebec receive fluoride, and it has even beer
by the provincial Government. I suggest, the
my hon. and learned Friend puts too much we
Quebec study.

The most amazing things were said ab
between fluoride and cot deaths. It was cl
nobody had ever investigated the matter. The
National Health and Medical Research Council
a study in 1979. It examined death rates in re
deaths and found no association with fluoridati
the city of Sydney has had fluoridated water
and has the lowest cot death rate in the whole o

The question of allergic reaction to fluori
raised at enormous length by my hon. and lear
The American Association for the Study of Al
in 1971:

"There is no evidence of allergy or intolerance t
used in the fluoridation of community water suppl

In this country, Professor Lessoff said in 1982 t
also the unanimous view of the British Society
and Clinical Immunology.

The question of fluoridation in relation t
babies was raised. I shall not bore the House
details about that. There is no substantial or
increase in the fluoride levels ingested by bab
breast fed in areas where fluoride is added to
Infant mortality in fluoridated areas and in area
natural levels of fluoride is not higher than in
areas.

In Committee, my hon. and learned Friend
fluoride in relation to women on the pill. Inde
the only argument that he did not repeat again i
of his four-hour speech. In Committee he
authority, which was a paper published in 1
Wynn and Dr. Doar. So anxious are we to foll
word uttered by my hon. and learned Friend th
Dr. Wynn, who is now Professor of Human
at St. Mary's hospital, London. He was asked
present opinion was that the fluoridation of
harm women on the pill. His reply—which I
permitted to quote—was, "Absolute bloody
That is the present view of that authority who
and learned Friend cited in that important ma

My opponents chanted a word that I re
occasionally I spoke of people trying to raise fu
studies over obscure effects on plants, fish,
people in various parts of the world. That
opponents in the last few hours chanting th
people were cranks, charlatans, idiots and so

I have tried to compress my answers to m
learned Friend. He will, no doubt, con
dismissive. I appreciate that he spoke with c
passion and skill on a matter about which he fe
I hope that I have explained why he is wro
asserting that we will not listen, that we dis
scientists whom he cites, that we do not
arguments and that we place trust in the

almost certainly bloodless—bureaucrats in the Box who have been sitting all night listening to the debate, or in people outside.

Every assertion—some of them sensible, some of them cranky and idiotic, some put forward by charlatans—has been carefully examined in the light of British medical evidence and answered by the Government. It is not necessary, therefore, to accept any of the amendments in the group that the House is discussing. I accept that my hon. and learned Friend was not able to get round to all of them and to do justice to them all in his speech.

Amendment No. 98 tries to remove from parliamentary scrutiny the choice of which fluorines we put in the water. I should have thought that my hon. and learned Friend would have preferred to keep to the two specified in the Bill and not to give my right hon. Friend unfettered discretion to add more, which his amendment would do.

There is no point in reducing fluoridation from 1 mg per litre to ¼ mg per litre as amendment No. 52 suggests. There are no dangers that it is necessary to guard against and a reduction to that level would have no effect on dental caries.

Amendment No. 29 is a similar attempt to reduce the level of fluoride and my rejection of it relies on the same argument. The amendment is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Amendment No. 11 seeks to say that tests must be carried out with any new fluorine compound to ensure that it has no adverse effects on anyone before the Secretary of State can lay an order before the House under clause 2 to add the new compound to those already authorised. There are 50 separate inorganic chemicals and numerous products based on nine groups of organic chemicals that may be used in the treatment of water for human consumption. I dread to think of the parliamentary time that would be taken if any of my hon. Friends found a great issue of principle on any of the 50 inorganic chemicals and demanded that they should be removed from the list. All the chemicals and products are approved by the appropriate committee in the Department of the Environment and I think that there is no need for amendment No. 11.

I am sorry that I lack the ability to give the full weight to my arguments that my hon. and learned Friend did to his. I am not able to sustain over such a long time the case against his arguments. However, I believe that if he turned away from his campaigning literature, on which he draws so extensively, and studied the vast bulk of medical and other literature with which we have tried to provide him, he might at least find that there are two sides to the argument. I hope that the House will agree that our side of the argument is the one that should prevail.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cope *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was sitting at the end of the Bench below the Gangway and I distinctly saw my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) rise on a point of order and heard him get out the words "point of order" before my hon. Friend the Deputy Chief Whip moved the motion on the Question. On a previous occasion *Hansard* records the fact that a point of order was raised and that only after that was the Question put. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North clearly raised a point of order before my hon. Friend the Deputy Chief Whip moved the motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I had a similar point of order to deal with at the beginning of the debate. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) was present on that occasion. The answer is that the closure always takes precedence.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Had both interventions been coincident, no one would seek to ask for an interpretation or a further expression of judgment. However, it was recorded in the *Official Report,* as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has said, that I raised the point of order before my hon. Friend the Deputy Chief Whip got to his feet. I have not been in the House for very long—some five years—but it is my understanding that it has always been the habit in the past that when a point of order has been raised the Chair has taken it before proceeding with the Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Question is, That the Question be now put.

The House having divided: Ayes 162, Noes 83.

Division No. 144] **[9.52 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Fletcher, Alexander
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Ancram, Michael	Fox, Marcus
Arnold, Tom	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Batiste, Spencer	Goodlad, Alastair
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Gow, Ian
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Gower, Sir Raymond
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Greenway, Harry
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Gummer, John Selwyn
Bottomley, Peter	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Harris, David
Bright, Graham	Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Browne, John	Hayes, J.
Bryan, Sir Paul	Hayhoe, Barney
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Henderson, Barry
Burt, Alistair	Hordern, Peter
Butler, Hon Adam	Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Jackson, Robert
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*	Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Jessel, Toby
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Cockeram, Eric	Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Colvin, Michael	Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Coombs, Simon	Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Cope, John	King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Couchman, James	King, Rt Hon Tom
Cranborne, Viscount	Knowles, Michael
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Knox, David
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Lamont, Norman
Dorrell, Stephen	Lang, Ian
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward	Lilley, Peter
Dunn, Robert	Lord, Michael
Durant, Tony	Lyell, Nicholas
Eyre, Sir Reginald	McCrindle, Robert
Favell, Anthony	Macfarlane, Neil
Fenner, Mrs Peggy	MacGregor, John

MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Crouch, David
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fisher, Mark
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Keliett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David John
McTaggart, Robert
Marlow, Antony
Maxton, John
Monro, Sir Hector
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Ms Jo
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Skinner, Dennis
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Straw, Jack
Terlezki, Stefan
Wainwright, R.
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs An
Winterton, Nichol
Young, David *(Bo*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones
Mr. John Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the ame
made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Fairbairn *(seated and covered)*: On
order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will there be sep
on the amendments in this group, as they are
substance and are different?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have looke
amendments and I am prepared to allow a vot
No. 52 or No. 29. Presumably it will be on
No. 29, which will have to be moved formall

The House having divided: Ayes 72, Noes

Division No. 145]

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cash, William
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(S*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn*
Jones, Gwilym *(C*
Kellett-Bowman, M
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(D*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Ron *(Carlis*
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David Jo
McTaggart, Rober
Molyneaux, Rt Ho
Monro, Sir Hector
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Penhaligon, David
Rost, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thornton, Malcoln
Walker, Bill *(T'sid*
Wells, Sir John *(M*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A
Winterton, Mrs An
Winterton, Nichol
Young, David *(Bo*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Keith Best an
Mr. Tony Marlow

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon R
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Vi
Braine, Rt Hon Sir
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Le
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forrester, John
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

10.15 am

Amendment proposed: No. 29, in page 2, line 10, aft 'one' insert 'half of a'.—*[Mr. Lawrence.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 73, Noes 164.

Division No. 148] **[10.16 a**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cash, William
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Loyden, Edward
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David John
McTaggart, Robert
Marlow, Antony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Norris, Steven
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thornton, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bill Walker and
Mr. Keith Best.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H*
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'brok*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forrester, John
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gummer, John Selwyn

Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Heyhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Major, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Marlow: I beg to move,

That a further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

As you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the debate has gone on long, hard and fast throughout the night. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have been involved in the debate and would wish to be involved in the next subject. However, it is late, and it has beem a long night. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are now past their best.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not argue the case.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not hear what you said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must not pursue an argument.

Mr. Marlow: I should not wish to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask you to consider, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned. We should now report progress so that we can come back fresh another day, and so that the Ministers can go about their proper business. As we know, many Ministers do not really support the Bill. They are required to do so by the exigencies of their position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to accept the motion. I call Mr. Lawrence.

10.30 am

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 39, at end insert—

'(9) No statutory water undertaker shall accede to an application by a health authority pursuant to subsection (1) unless the said water undertaker is satisfied that it can continuously and effectively discharge its obligations under subsection (5) as to the concentration of fluoride in the water supplied without employing directly or indirectly, additional manpower.'.

First, may I say that I resent the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I am by no means past by best. I was just getting going in the last debate when I found it necessary to take a short break, and at that point the Division was called. That is life. My hon. Friend says that we are past our best. I remind him of the words of the poet Browning:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made".

I move the amendment in the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who cannot be here. My speech will be even shorter than was my last brief contribution. I can also tell my hon. Friends and my supporters in this important and justified cause that I think it almost impossible that my hon. Friend will resist the amendment. We may therefore proceed much faster. I say that for two reasons. First, the amendment does no more than add to the Bill what my hon. Friend has left out through sheer inadvertence. That inadvertence is apparent on the face of the Bill. The explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"The Bill has no effect on public sector manpower."

It is usual to enshrine in a Bill what is set out in the explanatory and financial memorandum. As those words appear on the front page of the Bill, it was clearly intended that they should be given effect in the Bill itself.

I give due allowance to my right hon. and learned Friend and to my hon. Friend. It may be that the omission was caused for the same reason as appears at the top of the front page of the Bill where we read:

"This Bill is being re-issued because Mr. Secretary Fowler's name was omitted as the Member presenting the Bill."

A mistake was made in the preparation of the Bill. Mr. Secretary Fowler's name was left out of the list. Perhaps there was a typographical error or a slip in the office. Perhaps the ladies and gentlemen who advise the Minister were so preoccupied with the guts and heart of the Bill—the indescribable harm that might be caused to those who have to ingest fluoride that they do not want and which cannot possibly benefit them—that they omitted to be careful about the original drafting. No doubt that is why the name was omitted and no doubt that is why the financial provision, the effects of the Bill on public sector manpower, was left out.

Those words are intended to be included in the Bill to make up the deficiency—I bear no ill will and am only

too pleased to help—that the overworked staff at the DHSS and the overworked person of the Minister missed when the Bill was produced. I can confidently say that this is the amendment that the Government would have wanted included. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor specifically said in the autumn statement that water authority borrowing was part of the public sector borrowing requirement. Since that is indisputable, this measure must find a place somewhere in the text of a public Bill.

I am of innocent mind and prefer to think that—I hope that the House will forgive me for using this expression—sod's law rather than any other type of law works. This means that certain deplorable incidents are not noticed. For example, in November 1979, in one incident in Annapolis, a waterworks employee accidentially caused a discharge of 1,000 excess gallons of fluoride into the drinking water, increasing the concentration of fluoride to 15 times its normal level. As a result, eight patients at a private kidney clinic suffered nausea, vomiting, weakness and burning sensations in the chest. After about an hour or so of treatment, they were all taken off the machines, but, in spite of the treatment, one patient died.

Doctors did not know the cause of the terrible affliction until the mistake at the waterworks was reported. The information was not officially released. As one official said, "We do not want to jeopardise the fluoridation programme." A report in 1979 in the *Evening Capital*, the Annapolis newspaper, showed that the state authorities had admitted the accidental—it was not deliberate—spillage of 1,000 gallons of fluoride into the city's drinking water. They said that the spillage might not have been detected had not illnesses been reported at the kidney clinics. Thank goodness there were suffering kidney patients in the area, or the position could have been worse. Doctor George Waldbott an American expert on fluoride poisons, was invited to Annapolis. He found tht a vast amount of harm resulted from the accident. he found that 90 per cent. of the 108 residents whom he interviewed had suffered fluoride poisoning to some degree.

One does not want to make too much of it. Such mistakes can happen at any time or in any place—it is one of the facts of life. If one starts playing about with a poison and someone makes a mistake, things go wrong.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment deals with a narrow point about the employment of extra manpower. I am listening carefully. Frankly, I think that until now the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has not spoken to the amendment.

Mr. Lawrence: I apologise. I am sorry that you had to pull me up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was going to say that extra care is needed to supervise all these instrumentations, so that such accidents do not occur. That means an increase in manpower and the public sector borrowing requirement.

I suppose that the Minister was in a dilemma. I have no doubt that the matter was discussed in the Department and that the Department had to settle for an unnecessary and unfortunate compromise. Down the road at No. 11 was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I do not think he is an enthusiastic supporter of the Bill, any more than half the Cabinet or half the Government are. We know that the Bill would never get on to the statute book if there were a genuine free vote. One can imagine the Chancellor of the Exchequer telephoning the Minster for Health and saying, "Okay, Ken, you can have your Bill, but not a penny out of public expenditure because we are making cuts; we are not in the business of making increases." Then Ken was under pressure from all those well-meaning, do-gooding doctors, dentists and bureaucratics in his Civil Service and he did not know which way to turn.

I cannot be sure about it, but it may be that an uneasy compromise was arrived at—"We will not put in the Bill anything about public sector manpower expenditure. In fact, we will put in the explanatory memorandum on the front of the Bill that it has no effect on public sector manpower. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will look only at the outside, see that and not notice that within the Bill there is no such provision." That is why it is necessary to make the amendment.

It may be that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is not happy about the amendment. If he is not, we shall know that it was all a ruse. If he is happy with it and accepts it, we shall know that it was not a ruse but a genuine mistake which he will want to correct so that there will be no increase in public expenditure. That will all be to the good and we can go on to next business.

Mr. Nell Hamilton: I believe that my hon. and learned Friend is being unduly optimistic. In his characteristic way of wishing to help the Government and Ministers in the predicament in which they find themselves, he is understating the potential increase in public sector manpower. He referred to the Annapolis case. That would never have come to light had it taken place in a centre where kidney dialysis machines were not available. If, as a result of the fluoridation of the water supply, there is an increase in the number of kidney failures or other kidney complaints, that will lead to an even greater demand for kidney machines. The Government have been embarrassed quite enough in recent weeks about the failure of the National Health Service to provide facilities of that kind. I believe that the National Health Service manpower figures will also need to be increased. Has my hon. and learned Friend considered that?

Mr. Lawrence: I do not want to be taken down the path of considering ever-increasing public expenditure. Although I am known by many people as a Left-winger, my views on public expenditure and the financing of the economy are very much to the Right. I would be extremely sympathetic to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he wished to curb public expenditure on this unnecessary measure and very unsympathetic to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister if he wanted to spend more.

I shall draw attention to another case because the Minister will say, "We have heard about Annapolis before. That is the only example that the antis can produce, they have no other examples of breakdown." There are other examples. I should like to cite one which comes from the superintendent of Wilmington water system, Wilmington, Massachusetts. On 28 February 1962 he wrote to his fellow townsmen as follows:

"As Superintendent of Wilmington's water system, it has been my responsibility to add sodium fluoride to our water since 1955. Having had close contact with this toxic material and feeling a deep concern for the people of Wilmington, I am compelled to report to you on this situation before you vote next Saturday on whether or not to continue fluoridating our water supply.

[Mr. Lawrence]

Since the installation of the fluoridator at the pumping station, there has been a series of breakdowns of that equipment due to corrosion of the metal parts. I have been asked how much longer it will be before the same thing happens to pipes, meters, hot water tanks and household plumbing, even though the concentration in the fluoridator is much stronger than in the system. It is my duty to report that I have already observed an increase in corrosion throughout the town since we started adding fluoride to our water. I must also notify the townspeople that it has been impossible to maintain the recommended one part per million. This is the concentration which we add to the water at the pumping station; but tests of fluoride in the lines have fluctuated from 0·4 to 1·4 parts per million, dangerously close to 1·5 parts per million which according to the US Public Health Service makes the water unsafe for drinking purposes."

10.45 am

Wilmington abandoned fluoridation by a substantial vote on 3 March 1962. That shows that such accidents can happen in the best organised systems, and they are always expensive. There must always be additional manpower. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will say that that was a long time ago and that we have better systems now, with more people employed to supervise those systems.

Mr. Marlow: I think that I am right in believing that my hon. and learned Friend was a member of the Committee on the Bill. Therefore, he will have been presented with the pristine version of the Bill. He will have noted that on the front page, under the heading "Financial effects", it states:

"The Bill involves no additional public expenditure."

Under the heading, "Effects of the Bill on the public sector manpower", it states:

"The Bill has no effect on public sector manpower."

I presume that that means no direct or indirect effect on public service manpower. We know that some water authorities are in the public sector and some are not. Is the Bill more likely to have an impact on the private sector than on the public sector? In Committee, did the Government introduce amendments which, when accepted by the Committee, would lead to a change in the commitment made by the Government on the front of the original Bill that there would be no implications for public sector manpower and finance? If that is not the case, does my hon. and learned Friend find fault with the original commitment of the Government, believing that it is something up with which they cannot keep?

Mr. Lawrence: All those questions could be answered more authoritatively by my hon. Friend the Minister, who I know has been paying close attention to them. I would only be taking the time of the House unnecessarily if I embarked on a fruitless path to deal with this matter.

Sir Dudley Smith: I followed closely what my hon. Friend said. From what he told the House, it is crystal clear that manpower must be increased because of the Bill's emphasis on fluoridation. It could be argued that we should double our supervision of fluoridation. It will be essential to have extra manpower in the public interest. My hon. and learned Friend told us about two incidents in America. In those circumstances, does he believe that it is impossible for the Government to accept his amendment or to state, as the front of the Bill does, that extra public expenditure will not be incurred?

Mr. Lawrence: I cannot give my hon. Friend any such assurances. I saw my hon. Friend the Minister listening closely to the question. Of course, cost is involved.

I do not wish to be accused simply of talking about Annapolis and Wilmington. There was a fairly thoroughgoing review in Seattle of the cost of fluoridating as a result of plumbing corrosion after the city's water supply was fluoridated. We must bear in mind the fact that fluorosal acylic acid is highly corrosive and toxic, as a by-product of phosphate fertiliser manufacture, and there was a dramatic increase in Seattle in corrosion and plumbing failures. They had to be paid for, and of course they involved manpower expenditure. The problems were at first attributed by city officials to the effects of dissolved oxygen and augmented fluoridation. A study was set up by a firm called Kennedy engineers, and in 1970 it was conservatively estimated that, by 1976, plumbing and corrosion costs in Seattle would be more than $7 million a year, or about $30 per dwelling. That led to the conclusion that fluoride corroded pipes, and a report on the subject stated:

"Especially important for domestic plumbing are the total immersion or standing water tests, which indicate that fluoridation increases the rate of corrosion for copper and galvanised steel pipe by a greater margin than the addition of an equivalent concentration of chlorine to cold water"——

which was river water nearby—

"and to a lesser extent than additional chlorination for Cedar water."

In the overall summary and conclusions of the extensive studies on the effects of chlorination and fluoridation on internal corrosion, the report said:

"Chlorination and fluoridation both significantly increase the rate of corrosion for copper, galvanised steel and black steel piping."

In their conclusions, Kennedy engineers pointed out that as well as the serious health hazards of those contaminants, there was the danger of toxic fluoride accumulation in the pipes, and the report stated:

"Obviously, if a substantial portion of the scale breaks loose"——

referring to sediment in the pipes—

"and is accidentally ingested, it could be quite toxic. Moreover, such levels indicate that fluoride distribution in the water is far from uniform and even."

The Kennedy report showed water fluoride concentrations ranging from 0·62 to 1·55 parts per million in the Cedar river distribution system.

A number of problems arise. For example, the report went on:

"The problem is when fluoride is released into a reservoir. The higher regions retain the fluoride and the lower regions do not"——

perhaps it should have been the other way round—

"and further down the supply they get, there is more . . . or less . . . fluoride and it is not equally distributed."

That is the well known problem of distribution. It must be supervised and that involves manpower.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: That involves manpower, and as I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) wishes to intervene, I gladly give way to him because he knows more about the manpower considerations involved in these matters than any other hon. Member.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: My hon. and learned Friend is saying that these issues are becoming more complex. The Minister may try to dismiss some of his argument by saying that the problems he has raised are 20 years old and that more modern equipment exists. It follows that because the equipment is more modern, it is more complex and

requires even more highly skilled manpower to operate it. The cost of the salaries—because past a certain level such operatives have salaries rather than wages—will mean not only that costs will be substantially increased but that the technical knowledge needed will be that much greater .

Mr. Lawrence: Precisely, and my hon. Friend, having been a Minister at the Department of the Environment, knows much more about these matters than those of us who have not been privileged to serve in a spending Department—or indeed in any Department—or who may never serve in one in view of our opposition to the Bill.

Lest the Minister, when replying, says that I am providing scant information, it might help if I cite a few other examples. *The Journal of the American Water Works Association* for 1951 said:

"Sodium silicofluoride solutions have been found to destroy steel pipes very rapidly."

The newsletter of the Plumbers of Australia in 1956, under the heading

"Fluorides in Industry Effects on Water Pipes",

wrote:

"In a large steel tank, protectively painted, corrosion had taken place . . . removed the baked enamel . . . penetrated the steel . . . In a cement tank, the cement had deteriorated, causing the sand to sink to the bottom."

The report added:

"Fluorides are doing a real cleaning job on the inside of the underground water mains of the town of North Andover's public water supply! Their corrosive action will soon require their replacement. Fluoridation is softening the heavy rust formation that has collected on the inside of the town's watermains over the years to a semi-soft consistency. As it frees itself it carries along with the water. The water brings this semi-soft sludge to our filters."

If we are to stop that happening, there will have to be a little man at each end, as it were, with another man in the middle. Perhaps it will be necessary to have a large man supervising them. We know that the cost of supervision is considerable. I have said nothing, of course, about the cost of replacing the infrastructure, which is becoming rotten as a result of the corrosive effect of this highly toxic and corrosive chemical. These are financial considerations that we cannot afford to brush to one side. They cannot be ignored and they will not be ignored because they have been drawn to the attention and interest of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That has been stated clearly and it was unfortunate that when we read the Bill we could find no reference to them.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I must be careful, as my hon. and learned Friend is talking about little men. I hope that he will recall the danger of the strange commission outside the House that might take him to task. Presumably he means little persons.

Mr. Lawrence: Unless we have done something about people's pay, the cost of employing little women will be rather less than that of employing men. I hope that we have done what we no doubt undertook to do in the Conservative party manifesto, although that is not proof of anything. I hope that we have gone out of our way to ensure that women earn as much as men in the Department. That will mean that there will be no cost differentials. The cost of little people or big people, men or women, has to be reflected in the Bill in some way.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. and learned Friend has raised a number of questions in our minds. He has, for instance, described certain matter so engagingly as soft sludge. In a constituency such as mine, the distance that water travels from its source will sometimes be vast, so that the pieces of fluoren phthalamic acid, or anything associated with it, will gather in greater quantities the greater the distance that it travels, so the dosage will increase with the distance.

I have never come across a more extraordinary concept than the one which the Bill promotes. We are told that there will be no increase in manpower and no increase in expenditure. It is not my experience that those who have this filthy stuff—fluoride—are anxious to give it away free, to deliver it free, to put it in free, to measure it free or to feed it in free. I tabled an amendment, which was not selected by Mr. Speaker, which stated that no local authority or water authority——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing amendments which have not been selected. We are discussing a particular amendment and the hon. and learned Gentleman must relate his intervention to it. It has been a long intervention already and I hope that he will bring it to a conclusion.

Mr. Fairbairn: I appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to assist my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). The Bill states, in effect, that an expensive compound is to be added to water and that the addition will not cost anything. How can that be so? If it is so, the Government have solved all our economic problems. They should apply the same idea to every other Bill and to every concept. I want my hon. and learned Friend to concentrate his mind on how it can be that non-existent people will put free fluoride in non-existent lorries which are driven by no one, at a strength which nobody tests, but which everyone knows is correct, with no salaries being paid so that none of us suffers. It is a marvellous concept. If it is right, we shall all be able to go to the Smoking Room and have free drinks served by nobody in a glass which does not exist.

11 am

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Before my hon. Friend leaves that point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot have an intervention on an intervention.

Mr. Lawrence: I should welcome an intervention, because I am looking for a letter from the Minister on this important matter.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am obliged to my hon. and learned Friend for giving way. I thought that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) had completed his intervention and that I was therefore in order to put a fresh point to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). My hon. Friend the Member for Burton has considered the possibility of an accidental excessive fluoridation of public water supplies and dangers that might result from transporting the water. Subsection (5) is precise and provides for the fluoridation of water as a statutory obligation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This intervention is developing into a speech.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. and learned Friend has not dealt with the amount of fluoridation provided for in subsection (5) when talking about other reasons for excessive fluoridation. Different scientists and different

[Mr. Stanbrook]

analysts of water supplies reach different conclusions on the same samples, so it is possible for there to be variations which would be in breach of the statutory obligations.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend has made an interesting intervention. I am not sure whether I can answer it. It is perhaps best left to my hon. Friend the Minister, who knows more about these details than I do.

I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) about costs. Dr. M. Harris of the University of Aston in Birmingham has said:

"when artificial fluoridation is commenced, lime water will also have to be added, especially to soft waters to stop iron leaking out of pipes".

Lime water must be bought and its introduction to the system must be supervised. If hon. Members think that absurd, they should consider the fact that, in November 1974, the Seattle water department proposed adding between 200 tonnes and 500 tonnes of lime to cure the rising tide of corrosion complaints. The decision had to be revoked because no one knew what effect lime would have on people. That is a typical result of this unpleasant business.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for enabling me to find a letter, which I should now like to mention, in the wealth of literature in my file. The letter was written to me by my hon. Friend the Minister on 19 February 1985 concering the sources of hexafluorsilicic acid and disodium hexafluorosilicate. He assured me that they were manufactured from natural mineral sources, that both were produced for the phosphate fertiliser manufacturing industry, that hexafluorsilicic acid was manufactured in Britain and that disodium hexafluorosilicate was imported from the United States. At what cost is this stuff imported in ships from the United States? I do not have the costings of various ship sizes with me, but no doubt before this matter is exhausted I can get hold of them. However, it is clear that this service is not free. Nobody runs around saying, "Please can we give you our ships and our fuel and our"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it a little difficult to relate the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks to additional manpower.

Mr. Lawrence: That reminds me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall have to be elsewhere in a moment, so I shall try to be brief. The point is that to staff the boat coming from wherever in the United States this stuff is loaded on to it, and to pay for the people who have to process the stuff and load it on to trucks, escort the stuff to the ports, where it has to be loaded on to the ships and ferry it across the north Atlantic, no doubt with a crew of some sort—this is not done automatically—where at this end it has to be unloaded and put in trucks, cannot cost nothing. There will be a cost in manpower and in much else.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. and learned Friend, but he will have noticed that I am under pressure.

Mr. Fairbairn: I did notice that my hon. and learned Friend was under pressure. The phrase that he read out from the Minister's letter was as absurd as anything. It said that these organic salts come from pure organic sourc How the Devil can one get an organic salt if one does get it that way?

Mr. Lawrence: I do not know the answer to that. I s strictly within the terms of the amendment. I moved because it is clear that my hon. Friend the Und Secretary's intention, or certainly that of my right h Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is that th should be no public expenditure, and therefore that m appear in the Bill. If it does not, there is a possibility t there will be public expenditure, the explanat memorandum will be misleading, and my right h Friend the Chancellor will have been misled. There v have to be a paraphernalia to poison the water supp Once the water authorities get their manpower directed the repair of water works and the protection of the citiz who have to drink the stuff, it is clear that there will h to be considerable expenditure. I hope that my hon. Fri the Under-Secretary will forgive me if I sit down, beca there is another place to which I must be off.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): As nearly all of us w are Radio 4 listeners have missed "Prayer for the Day" t morning and may miss the epilogue tonight I though might be appropriate to begin my speech with a hymn goes

"Through the night of doubt and sorrow
Onward talked the one man band,
Preaching anti-fluoridation
Searching for the promised land."

It seems a long time since Second Reading, and I h tried to make this speech on four different amendmer Luckily, this happens to be the one with which it is m perfectly attuned. On Second Reading, I declared interest as the director of a water company, and during earlier stages of the Bill, here and upstairs, I made so points that are of concern to water undertakings in gene I emphasise the absolute neutrality of the wa undertakings which are the primary targets of amendment. They are neutral on the question fluoridation. I hope that I can help my hon. Friends some technical matters. I am also completely neutral. I so neutral that I would make a Swedish pacifist seem extremist.

I have listened to almost every word on the subject I have listened to many words delivered by my hon. learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence missed only the first day of the Report stage of the when I could not be present because I was in Ca investigating water and waste water supplies there. Ma of us are suffering deeply from the occupational hazard listening to debates in this Chamber. My experience is t the longer one listens to the speeches by our colleagues more we are turned against the views that they repres

Sir Dudley Smith: Did my hon. Friend listen to powerful and convincing speech in the early hours by former Solicitor-General, my right hon. and lear Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival)?

Sir John Page: I did listen to that speech. My ri hon. and learned Friend was cheered when he deman a serious approach to the Bill. I am not sure that fulfilled his desire.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Page: No, not for quite a long time. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has had a few helpings of the rice pudding and I shall stick to my own plate for a while.

Most of the speeches have been by hon. and learned Members. Sir Winston Churchill said that lawyers made the best Members of Parliament—once they forgot that they were lawyers. Sometimes in the night I felt that I was being addressed as a jury.

I have told my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) that I shall mention him rather rudely in my speech today. In a previous debate my hon. Friend said that he did not intend to indulge in scaremongering, but he went on with the scares. Speaking about the ability of water undertakings to carry out fluoridation my hon. Friend said:

"That subsection is regarded by many of my hon. Friends as carte blanche for saying, 'Take a stab in the dark; take it or leave it; do not bother to get it right, but just have round about the 1 mg per litre level and everybody will be satisfied.' There is no provision in the Bill for the level of fluoride to be monitored by anybody, let alone by the Secretary of State, who is answerable to the House . . .

Secondly, if it were a discharge of the functions and duties of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the new laws merely to appoint the statutory water undertakings to effect the monitoring, that would be regarded by many, and certainly by myself, as a matter of great concern . . .

We must not say to water authorities or health authorities through the medium of the Bill that they can have a stab at getting it right and that they need not bother to get it absolutely right." —[*Official Report*, 26 February 1985, Vol. 74, c. 199.]

11.15 am

I feel that my hon. and learned Friend has been positively offensive to water undertakings because I believe that they produce wholesome water for our people, for which we should be grateful. It was uncharacteristically mean of him to attack the water undertakings and give the idea that a chap will come along with a bucket of fluoride, fling it in, and then go off to the pub and say, "That's all right", and nobody will care.

The water that we drink has had to be carefully treated and monitored. It is important for hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith), to be comforted—I think that my hon. Friend will be—by what I have to say. Under the Water Act 1945 and the Water Act 1973 statutory water undertakers have a duty to supply wholesome water. Also, in recent years the World Health Organisation's "European Standards for Drinking Water" in 1970 and the report of the Department of Health and Social Security on public health and medical subjects entitled "The Bacteriological Examination of Water Supplies" have been accepted by successive Governments as giving guidance on criteria for wholesomeness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is now getting a little wide of the amendment. I am sure that he can relate his remarks to the point about additional manpower.

Sir John Page: I was adjusting this part of my speech to subsections (1) and (5). The amendment refers to the water undertaker continuously and effectively discharging its obligation. I feel that that is a nascent part of the argument.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. We are discussing amendment No. 4 on the Order Paper, and I am sure that he will be able to address his remarks to it.

Sir John Page: I shall most earnestly try to do so,. I was trying to show how water undertakings can continuously and effectively discharge their obligations under subsection (5). I am rather anxious to do so because so far not a single word has been said technically on that vital point, although on many occasions in previous debates and this debate, and in the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington, the technical ability of water undertakings to carry out fluoridation has been questioned. I am addressing those remarks to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I believe that it is important, as the matter has been brought up so many times, that I am allowed five minutes to put on the record the vital technical details that all my hon. Friends are demanding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The difficulty is that the hon. Gentleman appears to be addressing his remarks to subsection (5), whereas the amendment inserts a new subsection (9). It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman is making a speech that would be more appropriate to Third Reading than to the amendment. I am sure that he can address his remarks to the amendment that we are discussing, which concerns additional manpower.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Surely the duties required entail additional manpower, so there is a close link, which possibly my hon. Friend is about to reach.

Sir John Page: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was trying to show the method by which fluoridation take place. However, if it is difficult for me to continue on that basis, I shall try to skip through the matter a little more, although I am disappointed——

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I am fortunate enough to catch your eye later in the day on this amendment, I should like this matter to be clarified. As I understand your ruling, we cannot discuss the effective discharge of the water undertaker's obligation under subsection (5). But that, with great respect, is relevent to the amendment as a whole. In this debate we must surely be able to consider that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is certainly correct. The point I made to the hon. Gentleman is that his remarks must be related to the amendment that we are discussing. The amendment relates to additional manpower.

Sir John Page: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall do my best.

The fact is that 50 chemicals are approved for the purposes of water treatment. They are used in water pumping stations and plants. Although many are checked automatically, clerical work and chemical work has to be carried out in order to ensure that the checking is properly undertaken. it is interesting to note that most of the 50 chemicals in their concentrated form have serious implications for health and the environment. The results of the tests that employees will have to undertake will be reported to the local health authorities. It is important for my hon. Friends and the public in general to know that these reports will be made available to the consultative

[Sir John Page]

committees and local authorities, and it is unlikely that they would not be made available to the public if a proper request were to be made.

The water that we drink has already, without the addition of fluoride, gone through a complicated chemical and bacteriological process. A great deal of supervision is carried out both on the spot and in the laboratories to ensure that no undue concentration of poisons such as chlorine, is added to the water,

I think it would be helpful if hon. Members were to hear about the technique that is used to introduce fluoride into public water supplies. As will be seen from the short catalogue from which I shall quote, supervision has to take place either at the time or about every 24 hours. It is important to realise that the risk of mistakes being made is minimal because of the technique that is employed. When a dosing system is designed in the drawing office of a water undertaking, a number of safeguards are built into the system in order to minimise, and virtually eliminate, the possibility of a serious overdose being introduced into the water. The safeguards include the provision and supervision of the following techniques. There is a day-tank which normally holds only sufficient chemicals for a 24 or 48 hours dosing. That is important. It must be supervised so that, even if there is a mistake no more than one or two days' fluoride can get into the water supply. The transfer between the bulk stock tanks and the day tank is by time or level interlock so that repeated transfer can only occur once in a time period. That time clock is supervised, initially electronically, with the electronic work checked by engineers. The dosing into the supply water is performed by a separate pump which is usually sized to work somewhere near its maximum speed so that there is no chance of a mistaken acceleration pushing in more fluoride. Dosing pipelines are fitted with anti-syphon valves carefully designed by water engineers to ensure that they work appropriately. There is continuous monitoring and recording of fluoride residual concentration by instruments and the water undertaker's laboratory.

There are normally daily checks, and daily samples are taken for laboratory analysis. It can sometimes be arranged for the water to be pumped into the service reservoir.

Sir Dudley Smith: I am following my hon. Friend's comments with great interest. Some of the phraseology that he is using is akin to an answer given, quaintly, by my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport, of all people, on 4 March 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Best). On the last point that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) made —I bow to his great expertise in these matters and that of the water authorities who provided the information— he talks about sampling and analysis, but the written answer clearly states:

"a few large manned works which store the water before supply reply on frequent manual sampling and analysis for fluoride."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. *349*.]

My hon. Friend was rather implying—I am sure that he was not attempting to mislead the House — that everyone goes in for manual sampling. According to that written answer only a few large manned works do that.

Sir John Page: I am grateful to my hon. Frien is a variation in the size of undertakings and the te used. I was taking care to keep in order and to s there was supervision.

To finish I shall quote the words of a senior ch a water undertaking. He said:

"I would state that technically if we are asked to c fluoridation process then we can control the residual to desired limits and produce a system to virtually eliminat of overdosing."

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me to make those points because I hope that the a comfort to many hon. Members and people There is no secrecy about fluoridation or any of many chemical processes that our drinking water through before it comes into our glass or, should is in vitro. Finally, I think that the most useful and way in which inquiries could be made in future matters connected with water undertakings w through the new consultative committees, wh beginning to work usefully and successfully.

11.30 am

Mr. John Patten: It is a pleasure for me to fo hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J It is a pleasure also to be discussing these importa here during the parliamentary equivalent of saving time. The nation is at work, we are in offic the shops are open, and Parliament is at work. It that we should be scrutinising important points this morning. Alas, however, a couple of ghosts a from our discussions.

The first ghost—in such circumstances the more terrifying apparition than he—is my hon the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). Friend cannot be with us this morning. It was tabled Amendment No. 4. Nothing strikes chi quicker dread in the hearts of my civil servants sight of my hon. Friend's name to an amendm procedural matter. We all know my hon. Friend on procedural matters. The moment his name app the amendment, pandemonium broke out at the and Castle, which is normally a well-conduc quiescent Ministry. Civil servants ran this way an their attempt to ascertain whether we had made a We have peculiar punishments at the Elephant an for those who make mistakes.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give w

Mr. Patten: No. Before I make room for tangible apparition, I must refer to the second my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Bur Lawrence). With his characteristic courtesy, my l learned Friend approached me from behind and, his hand on my shoulder and squeezing it for a wh that he had to go to the Old Bailey and hoped that forgive him if he was not here to hear my rem course I forgive my hon. and learned Friend. I account the pressing reasons that have taken him

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged to my hon. Fri not only for giving way. I am also obliged to hi fact that I have not had to squeeze him from behi would have given me no pleasure and might ha my hon. Friend a most appalling communicable

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that civil —who did not in fact frop out of sight when

was mentioned — become timid when any procedural matter appears on the amendment paper under the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). However, this is not a procedural matter. The civil servants may rise again. they may jump up and down and play with their yoyos. The matter is not procedural. It is very simple. There is a conundrum, and if my hon. Friend can solve it he will please all the Scots. How can one buy something and distribute it, and employ people to do so, at no cost?

Mr. Patten: I am pleased to be led into that point so clearly by my hon. and learned Friend. In referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton in general terms as raising a procedural point, I was referring in particular to his views on what should or should not have been included in the financial and explanatory memorandum. My hon. Friend has an eagle eye for such points, and over many years he has protected and assaulted Governments on such points with great success.

I contend that the Bill is correctly described, according to the recognised conventions of this place, in the way in which it refers to manpower. Bills normally have a specific mention of manpower in the explanatory memorandum only when that follows directly from the enactment of the Bill—for example, if it sets up some brand spanking new public body. We are not necessarily keen to do that. In comparison with that possibility, the Bill is no more than enabling legisation. It does not lead to the setting up of any new schemes or the beginning of new expenditures. It is designed to clarify the legal powers of statutory water undertakers to fluoridate the water supply at the request of health authorities. the Bill does no more and no less than that.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether I can move at this late hour, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned. I have tried to listen to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am not prepared to accept that motion at the moment.

Mr. Marlow: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House has been sitting for a long time and hon. Members, like myself, are not able to concentrate on my hon. Friend's important points. When do you consider that such a motion might be properly put? Not only myself, but Ministers and people with important jobs in the interests of the country have been up for a long time. They are interested, as is the rest of the House, in this measure and would wish to come refreshed to the debate to give it proper consideration. I am sure you will appreciate that it is not possible for us to give such consideration at the moment. I am stumbling over my words because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Member's point. He is an experienced parliamentarian and knows that the Chair will not comment on hypothetical situations.

Mr. Golding: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Speaking for all Labour Members, I should certainly want to hear the Under-Secretary of State and other Back Benchers who have not participated so far. It would be dreadful to consider this motion in the middle of the debate. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) must learn the usual channels and negotiate for natural breaks, rather than intervene in the middle of a Minister's speech. That is not right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his assistance.

Mr. Patten: I must make it absolutely clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that I do not take any offence at what he said. I seek only to draw to the attention of the House the critically important issues that have been raised in this interesting debate. Our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and our hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) have spoken with authority. I dare say that if other hon. Members are fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will speak on this important issue as well.

We are only just into the 13th hour of this debate. We have made progress, but I think that it would be entirely wrong, when the nation is at work, for Parliament to decide to pack up and go home. I am a little surprised at my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North, who does not seem to be showing the characteristic zip, vim and vigour for which he is noted.

Mr. Best: I am encouraged by the comments of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. May I take it that my hon. Friend unequivocally speaks on behalf of the Government in saying that they are thoroughly satisfied with the way in which matters are going? It will be helpful to have my hon. Friend's comments ringing in my ears if anything untoward happens later.

Mr. Patten: Doubtless all sorts of things are likely to ring in the ears of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). The debate is extremely useful and full. It would be patently absurd to stop now, when we are only into the 13th hour of the debate. I believe that if time is needed—13, 18 or 24 hours—to consider these issues, we must find that time.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *rose——*

Mr. Patten: I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West, in whose constituency I was pleased to speak in his support last Friday, is attempting to intervene. I dare say that he is about to speak in my support. I am pleased to give way to him.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My hon. Friend's contribution on St. David's day in the capital city of Wales was greatly appreciated, even though he did not notice that the name of the constituency was Cardiff, North.

I listened carefully to the explanation that my hon. Friend gave in response to the previous intervention of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) about the implication in the explanatory and financial memorandum that the Bill will not cause any extra public expenditure or any extra manpower requirement.

I take the point that my hon. Friend made, that in itself this is enabling legislation, and so in itself it will not lead to the employment of people or to expenditure, but the measure could result in more people being employed and in money being spent. Can my hon. Friend tell the House his estimate of the savings in manpower and in expenditure if the present illegal operations cease? Alternatively, what does he project as the likely expansion of the present illegal activities if they become legal?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising those matters, because they bring us hard back to the argument which I was trying to develop before the interesting intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North.

The Bill does not oblige any statutory water undertaker, nor any private company, anywhere in the country to implement any new fluoridation schemes. There is no evidence of that on the face of the Bill. I challenge my hon. Friend to read the Bill from end to end to see if he can find any instruction to any water undertaker——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I am a little disinclined to give way again so soon to my hon. Friend when I am trying to reply in full to a most interesting and important intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). I am still sustained by the lafa bread and Welsh cake that I was given for tea last Friday by my hon. Friend's engaging constituents.

The Bill does not oblige any statutory water undertaker to implement any new fluoridation schemes; nor indeed to continue existing schemes which are subject to contractual arrangements regarding the date of termination of renewal. Bills will normally make a specific mention of manpower in the explanatory memorandum only when such a requirement will follow directly from the enactment if the Bill. Therefore, it is my contention that the Bill is neutral as to the number of fluoridation schemes that there should be, and consequently, as to the manpower required to service them. The Bill is directly described strictu sensu as having no public sector manpower implications——

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I do not think my hon. and learned Friend agrees with me.

Mr. Fairbairn: The Minister is absolutely right. We have heard some great falsehoods in the course of considering the Bill, but this must be the greatest yet. We are considering a Bill involving terrible pain and effort in its parturition, but the Government do not intend that it should be enacated. Therefore, because no statutory authority will act upon it, there will be no manpower implications and no cost implications. What the Minister is saying is that the whole of Parliament is being put through the pain of giving birth to a stillborn child which he does not believe will ever breathe or have any implications.

That is a most dishonest concept. The Minister knows that his purpose in trying to get this wretched, horrid and totalitarian measure through is so that statutory authorities which are, as he puts it, enabled to do so should act. If they do so, the Bill will have manpower and expenditure implications. It is totally dishonest to say, "I am enabling you to crucify Christ, but I am not necessarily saying that he will ever be crucified."

Mr. Patten: I do not intend to follow my hon. and learned Friend down the road to which he pointed in the latter part of his question, but, on the first part of his question, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister made it clear in his speech on Second Reading, as I tried to do in replying to that debate, that the Bill is designed to do no more than preserve the status quo. It is not designed to reduce or enhance the number of scheme are available to the general public for the fluoridat the water supply.

11.45 am

I can do little more than repeat those views parr to all interventions, because those are the views w happen to hold, and that is what I happen to believe. give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, wh been his usual courteous self in the debate. It appea he is saying that the Bill has no manpower o implications. It must follow, must it not, th fluoridation schemes can be contemplated b Government, because to have any scheme must invo element of cost and manpower? Therefore, the onl in which the Bill can be construed by the Governm that they do not expect there to be any fluori schemes. If that is the case, I take on board the point by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Per Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), and agree that we may hav through a lot of misery for nothing. But I am hearte it means that the Government do not intend to intr new fluoridation schemes.

Mr. Patten: The Government are neutral whether the number of fluoridation schemes increa decreases as a result of the passing of the Bill, sh eventually pass through the House, as I hope it wi hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn has important points about cash and expenditure, and to proceed now to deal with those points.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: No. I shall proceed to the points d with cash and expenditure. Once bitten, twice sh morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The House may be interested to know th manpower required to supervise the schemes is very My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West, excellent and interesting speech, made clear the w which fluoride can be added to the water and the ca concern which water authorities give to such mechanical tasks. However, in a few authorities example, the Newcastle and Gateshead water co — where fluoride is added manually, the requirement is four to five man-years to p fluoridated water through nine plants to no fewe three quarters of a million people. I am not sayi continue my debate with my hon. Friend the Mem Ynys Môn, that just because the sums involved ar —penny-packet numbers—we cannot properly whether that represents, on the face of the Bill, an in in cash.

Water authorities are not subject to man ceilings——

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: —and the addition of fluoride m paid for by the health authorities from cash-limited No amendments to the Bill, and no undertakings th have been given in Committee, will lead to the in of additional public sector manpower.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I sense behind me such a passionate urge to ask me a question that the softness of my heart compels me to relent.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend said that there was no requirement for a water authority to fluoridate the water supply. He will appreciate that there is a great deal of uneasiness among some water authorities, which feel that they may be faced with a requirement from the experts on the district health authority to fluoridate the water supply in their areas, and they may find it possible in some cases to fluoridate their own supply without inflicting the fluoride on the water supply of adjacent district health authorities.

The authorities feel that they do not have the knowledge to deal with that and that they should be provided with expert medical knowledge. At present, if they feel that they do not agree with the medical experts, they are not competent to argue the case. In other words, many water authorities will feel that, despite what my hon. Friend has said and what is in the Bill, they will be required to fluoridate the water supply because morally they will be unable to present a case against doing so. That is another way in which the measure could have an impact on employment and, therefore, on the costs of water authorities.

Mr. Patten: I do not follow the link between manpower, employment and costs. I see that my hon. Friend is concerned, as we all are, about the safety issue, and I appreciate the point that he makes about the fears that he believes water authorities may have. I cannot comment on hypothetical situations. I assure him that all the medical and scientific advice that we have is at the disposal of health authorities, as it is at the disposal of the water companies about which my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West spoke eloquently.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: I apologise to my hon. Friend and the House for not having been in my place throughout the night, particularly as I was a founder chairman of the all-party parliamentary group opposed to fluoridation. My doctor has forbidden me to attend all-night sittings.

I think that my hon. Friend has been trying to mislead the House. He has tried to pretend that the Department and his colleagues in it are neutral about further water fluoridation schemes. I refer him to the speech of our right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health on Second Reading, when he said:

"It is not a terrible affront to the freedom of an Englishman, a Scotsman, an Irishman or a Welshman to say, 'You will have in your water some harmless substance of which you are not aware, which benefits the teeth of your family and of others'". —[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 82.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can find no way of relating that long intervention to the amendment.

Mr. Patten: I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend will supply me with the name of his accommodating doctor. Many occupants of the Government Front Bench would find it useful to obtain exeats from time to time.

When my hon. Friend gets the opportunity to read the *Official Report* of what I said moments ago about the Government's attitude to the question whether there would or would not be any more schemes, he will see that I was not misleading the House in terms of trying to hide the fact that the Government believe that fluoridation is good. However, I said that the Government were neutral as to whether the introduction of this enabling Bill would lead to an increase or decrease in the number of schemes. We have no way of knowing what is in the minds of health and water authorities in that respect.

Against the background that statutory water undertakers can remain free to take on additional manpower, if required, to safeguard the operation of fluoridation schemes, and against the background that the cost involved in the payment of the small number of people would be met by health authorities from their existing cash-limited funds, leading to no net increase in public expenditure, because those funds are already available to them, I hope that hon. Members will agree, should a Division be pressed—and it will be interesting to see who presses it, as many hon. Members with an interest in the subject are, alas, no longer in the Chamber—that the House should not accept the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister referred to attendance in the Chamber. Would it be in order for a Division to take place just for hon. Members who are at present in the Chamber? My hon. Friend might then see just where the majority lies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is an intriguing suggestion, but it would get us into an awful muddle.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I echo the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) about the courtesy extended to the House by the Minister. We have been delighted to hear his comments. He has, to a large extent, cleared many of the doubts that lay within Members' minds about this enabling legislation.

Mr. Best: It is a delight to listen to my hon. Friend, because I know how much he holds these matters dear to his heart, as we all do. He may be speaking on behalf of many colleagues in this place, but he is not speaking entirely on my behalf. I was not especially happy with what the Minister had to say at the conclusion of his remarks. It seems obvious from what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has said that, because there will be no increase in health authorities' budgets, it will be necessary for moneys to be found from within their own funds. The money that is spent on fluoridation must necessarily be taken from expenditure on other items, such as primary health care. For those of us who are not convinced of the efficacy of fluoridation, is that not in itself a worrying concept?

Dr. Blackburn: Yes. My hon. Friend is right to draw this matter to the attention of the House. However, I invite him to exercise the great Christian gift of patience which he possesses. I shall address myself eventually to the issue to which my hon. Friend directed himself in his intervention.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was correct when he explained that this is an enabling Bill. There is no legal or statutory obligation on any health authority to introduce fluoridation. However, he has created an opportunity and provided a key for area health authorities to take such a course as would fall within the last part of the amendment. Acceptance of the amendment would have an adverse effect directly and indirectly on additional manpower. It is manifest that if we are to embark on this treatment of water, there is an on-cost and manpower involvement.

[Dr. Blackburn]

I am sure that all hon. Members paid special attention to the wonderful illustration that was presented to us by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who referred to the experience at Wilmington. I believe that that was the most important part of the evidence in support of the amendment. It was directed especially to the manpower factor that was introduced by the superintendent of the water authority. In effect, he said to his immediate authority, "We are experiencing considerable difficulties because of the corrosive effect of fluoride within the water supply and there is an on-cost." The other example related indirectly to manpower. It was a remarkable experience, which I do not believe the House has grasped.

Mr. John Patten: There are one or two ghosts that I wish to lay this morning.

We have heard much talk about the corrosive effect of fluoride on pipes. It is rather like listening to the CBI's pleas for increased expenditure on infrastructure, including the renewal of sewers. After 30 years' experience there is no evidence in Britain of fluoridation of water causing any significant corrosion of water pipes. In Birmingham and in adjacent areas, of which Dudley is one, there has long been fluoridation. There is no evidence that pipes have been corroded by fluoride. Equally, there is no evidence that additional expenditure has flowed from that. I ask my hon. Friend to accept that on 30 years' experience.

12 noon

Dr. Blackburn: I most certainly accept the comment of my hon. Friend the Minister without question. But equally I base my remarks on documentary evidence presented to the House by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton during his short speech in the early hours of the morning.

Mr. Golding: I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman is drawing attention to that part of the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) which revealed that there could be corrosion and other damage and using that as a reason for employing no more staff. If someone is trying to demonstrate that fluoride will cause damage or other difficulties, surely the last thing he should say is that no more people should be employed. It just does not add up.

Dr. Blackburn: I am saying in clear tones that evidence has been presented to the House which I am prepared to accept. I am talking about the documentary evidence given to us by my hon. and learned Friend. As responsible legislators, we should take note of such points, and bear in mind what my hon. Friend the Minister told us about experience in Birmingham over 30 years. We have a solemn responsibility to consider carefully the line that we should take, particularly in respect of additional manpower. In the amendment there is the important word "indirectly", upon which I wish to dwell later. I believe that there are both direct and indirect financial consequences of fluoridation.

I have no qualifications in this respect—I am a layman—but let us consider the fact that 50 chemicals are used in the preparation of the country's water supply. When large quantities of a poisonous substance—that is what it is—are put into the water suppl also be a balancing effect. The evidence debate about the inclusion of lime in the w Seattle to achieve that balance is somethin should take note.

I believe that my hon. Friend the Min scrupulously honest in saying that the conse Bill could eventually have a bearing in ter local health authorities; and he is perfec saying that there are no direct manpower c

In Dudley, West, the constituency th privilege to represent, there is one of the patient units in the country. Many of its pati versed in the use of dialysis equipment that out their own treatment at home. That represents a financial saving—and no d delight to the Minister's ears — but responsibility to those people regarding sa that before allowing fluoride to be put in have a responsibility to ensure that it is s mean more manpower. Indeed, I believe th would be a safety factor.

We have been told about people suffer complaints, and the fact that, when the wa contaminated with 1,000 gallons of fluori several tragic deaths. I do not wish constituents. I am addressing my remarks t However, it should be on record that the Ho to look to the Minister, within the orbit c legislation, and to say that it requires a hi safety, especially for kidney patients.

Mr. John Patten: I am grateful to my h giving way a second time. I promise not to i in his interesting speech.

Nothing separates us in our concern f Annapolis incident in 1979 was tragic, as hon. Friend is aware. One person died in th several others suffered nausea and sickness debilitating problems for a while. But is n aware that the real reason for that was that t treating the patients on kidney dialysis mac to standing instructions, were not treating t way in which all water in every kidney dialy country is treated to screen out the fluori and other noxious and dangerous products? for that to be on record to reassure kidney d about the safety of the treatment that they

Dr. Blackburn: It is self-evident from comments that we are kindred spirits. The s us together is a united desire for a safe cour for those who depend on kidney dialysis. my hon. Friend's comments will be throughout the country, especially by thos require renal dialysis. I welcome and comments. His was one of the most valuabl to the debate. It will be welcomed throughc

Mr. Patten: I thank my hon. Friend for

Dr. Blackburn: I am delighted that together on the question of safety.

I contend that, within the terms of the may well be—I put it no higher than th will be an increase in the number of people care of the water supply, especially for tha community to which we must give particu

I wish to dwell briefly on the important concluding words of the amendment, which are:

"without employing directly or indirectly, additional manpower."

It is difficult for anyone to present an argument, knowing that a key is being given to a local authority to go down a pathway the eventual consequences of which will be an increase in manpower. For that reason, I believe that the debate on this amendment has brought to the attention of the House and the country some important features—in particular, the safety measures which, with one voice, we want to see in the legislation, and especially the fact that supervision of a high order is necessary when treatment of the public water supply is involved.

In that spirit, I thank the House for receiving my comments and reiterate that I am especially pleased to have received the Minister's comments on this important issue.

Mr. Stanbrook: As this is the first time I have spoken on the Bill, except for a brief intervention, I hope that I shall be allowed to say why I am generally opposed to the Bill. That will not take more than a few seconds. This is unnecessary legislation. I am surprised that the Government, whose business is so blocked——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must stick to the amendment, even in his preamble.

Mr. Stanbrook: I had always understood that it was part of the spirit of this place that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in carrying out your duties as occupant of the Chair, allowed a little discretion to enable Members to stray somewhat from the point and from the rules of order. I have now occupied more time——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is a most experienced Member of the House, and I am sure that he has no intention of straying from the amendment.

Mr. Stanbrook: I had hoped to stay in order rather than to stray from the amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With respect, I believe that I was in order. However, as you insist on my going straight to the point of the amendment, I shall do so.

The amendment is designed to prevent extra manpower resulting from the Bill. That factor seems to have escaped the attention of many previous speakers. Excessive manpower is a vital consideration. Combating it lies at the heart of the Government's policy and philosophy. We have reduced Civil Service manning levels, with great pain and suffering for the people concerned. The Government take great pride in the fact that the number of people employed by the state has decreased during their period in office.

In pursuit of that objective, local government expenditure has been capped, resulting in a reduction in manpower. The Government have even intervened to prevent local authorities with capital balances — my borough of Bromley, for example, has a considerable sum available for housing improvement grants—from using all that money as they originally intended. One would not have thought that such capital balances were anything to do with taxation or public expenditure as such. That Government policy is presumably also designed to keep down manpower.

The theory behind the Government's policy, which is espoused by the supporters of the amendment, is that in the present state of the economy less manpower equal greater efficiency. In reducing bureaucracy, we devo ourselves to striving for a good objective. We hope th that will not only lead to more efficient government, b will promote the welfare of ordinary citizens. That is th idea behind the amendment.

The question often is: how can we employ more at le cost? The amendment poses that question in the form "How can we do more without employing more to do it? The burden of the Bill is that local authorities, wat authorities and health authorities will be entitled to d more under the law. The amendment is intended merel to insist upon a good Conservative principle—that that is to be done, it is not to be done at the cost o increasing the total manpower employed by the state. Tha is an essential principle, and it has not been observed b the Government. I am not convinced by my hon. Frien the Minister's response to earlier speeches on the subjec

The Government are creating an obstacle fo themselves with the Bill. They are now forcing through th House, with great effort, a Bill which is actively pursue by only a minority of Members—although perhaps th most influential minority, the payroll vote. The Bill is no supported or justified by a commitment in the electio manifesto. Moreover, it is contrary to the Government' own principle of reducing public manpower.

The amendment seeks to ensure that if water authoritie and health authorities act in the way in which the Bi entitles them to act they shall do so without employing directly or indirectly, additional manpower. This is reassertion of good Conservative principles, and I ar surprised that the Government's defence has come onl from their Front Bench, whereas the arguments against have come from the Back Benches. There cannot be decent democratic reason for the Bill to go forward, i view of the immense opposition that it has aroused.

12.15 pm

Sir Dudley Smith: My hon. Friend is right. Most o the argument against the Bill has come from the Bac Benches, and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Sir J. Page), who has an intimate knowledge o water authorities, made an interesting speech. I do no know whether my hon. Friend heard that speech, but drew from it the conclusion that this business was s complex, and the various provisions that had to b undertaken so difficult, that, inevitably, it would lead t extra manpower. Therefore, it explodes the arguments pu forward by the Front Bench.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am grateful to my hon. Friend fo making that point. I heard the speech of my hon. Frien the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) and I wa impressed by the new light which was shed on the problen from someone with experience of being a member of water authority.

It is clear that the Bill—especially subsections (1 and (5) which are referred to in the amendment—i indefensible. Subsection (5), as the amendment enjoins should not be implemented unless it can be done withou employing additional manpower, which is why my hon Friend the Member for Harrow, West no doubt ha reservations about it, as it imposes a precise statutor obligation upon a water undertaker. The purpose o subsection (5) is to ensure

[Mr. Stanbrook]

"that the concentration of fluoride in the water supplied to consumers . . . /is, so far as is reasonably practicable, maintained at one milligram per litre."

It does not say at "about" 1 mg per litre. It does not say that it may be "a little above" or "a little less". It says only: "so far as is reasonably practicable".

This exercise will be carried out by scientists and technical people who are presumably well able by calibrating and other methods to quantify the ingredients of any amount of water fairly precisely. What a legal imposition it will be to say that water fluoridation shall not exceed and shall be

"so far as is reasonably practicable, maintained at one milligram per litre."

I am drawn to observe that in practice, that, though my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) emphasised the dangers of accident and the corrosion of water pipes and so on, he left out of account the professional and personal difficulties that will be inherent in measuring so precisely a particular quantity of fluoride in water. I believe that as a result the reading will vary from place to place and from time to time even within the same area and within the same water supply.

When the driver of a motor vehicle is charged because the proportion of alcohol in his blood is higher than that permitted by law, a blood sample is taken. If that sample is divided into two or more parts and analysed by perfectly reputable public analysts and scientists, the reading almost invariably differs from one to another. When that can happen in connection with a law which is not quite as precise as that insisted upon in this subsection, how will a water authority be able to maintain one mg of fluoride per litre in any water supply? The Bill will impose an impossible burden on water authorities unless scientific manpower is increased and the scientific apparatus and other practical details are improved.

The amendment seeks to ensure that there shall not be an increase in the number of people employed by a health authority in connection with the fluoridation of the water supply. How can that be done, not only with regard to the increase in public expenditure, but from the point of view of employing additional people? How on earth can an authority achieve such standards without being in breach of its statutory obligation?

"Statutory obligation" sounds impressive at this stage, but when it comes to be enforced it will be a different matter. We shall be compelled to rely upon individuals, some village Hampden perhaps, to test whether the public authority has carried out its statutory obligations. The situation will be fraught with difficulties.

If only the Government had thought about this matter more fully, they would have realised that the Bill is totally unnecessary. I hope that they will withdraw it, because I believe that oponents of the Bill are justified in maintaining their opposition to it indefinitely.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker for calling me to speak. We have been debating the Bill for 14 hours and I have been trying to catch Mr. Speaker's eye for 13 hours.

I view amendment No. 4 in more than one way. The important wording is in the first part. The amendment says:

"No statutory water undertaker shall accede to an application by a health authority pursuant to subsection (1) unless the said water undertaker is satisfied that it can cont effectively discharge its obligation under subsectio concentration of fluoride in the water supplied".

The important phrases are, "accede to an app "discharge its obligation". There is a glari from the Bill, in that there is no definition key objectives will be achieved. Nor does i the statutory water undertaker will di obligations. I have gone through the Bill exte as far as I can see, it does not specify machinery to be used for discharging that acceding to an application. The Bill does not necessary tests relating to such machinery. No mention of any necessary supervision which for any tests on the machinery.

I recall that in our debate last week, my ri learned Friend the Minister for Health referre machinery presently in use that would fulfil of this enabling legislation.

I was somewhat disturbed, as I imagine oth and hon. Members were, by what the Minist said when defining the abilities of what he ha described as fail-safe machinery. He said:

"For practical reasons, it is not possible t concentration varying for most of the time betwee mg per litre. The upper limit imposed by the gui advisory committee is 1·5 mg per litre. That ra acceptable on health grounds and leaves a wi safety."—[*Official Report*, 26 February 1985; Vo

That appears to leave a wide margin o equally, if not more so, it leaves a very wi error. I do not readily equate a margin of er minus 20 per cent. with the concept of fail-saf

Dr. M. S. Miller: I am very interested in Gentleman says, but is he aware that in the ph industry and the application of that to medici can be up to 20 or 30 times the recommen margin of 20 per cent. is nothing, it makes whatsoever. One could double or treble fluoride—indeed, in many parts of the c are 20 or 30 mg per litre—and it would do

Mr. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope t Gentleman will resist the temptation to go amendment, which deals with additional ma

Mr. Jones: Certainly, Mr. Deputy Spea wish to go wide of the amendment. I acc Gentleman's professional expertise, but it d to square with what my right hon. and learne us last week. He said that there is a 20 per c and that the upper limit is only 1·5 mg—0 the upper end of the range within which he sa can vary, which is 1·2 mg. So there is a margin of error, plus or minus. It would take 25 per cent. margin of error to achieve the

The Annapolis incident has been mentio it was last week, and it should not be undere our considerations. It is so important that w earlier my right hon. and learned Friend was to demonstrate his understanding of the sit considering the concept of fail-safe machine absence of proper specifications in the Bill, they are implied under amendment No. 4 Member should read and thoroughly re-read

Official Report of 26 February. But I am sure that the hon. Members now present are sufficiently well aware of it for me not to have to go through it.

The Minister referred earlier today to the adding of fluoride in Newcastle. Does that come within the concept of fail-safe machinery? He said that fluoride was being added manually. He did not elaborate upon that. But he worries me greatly. Am I to take it that fluoride is being shovelled into the reservoir, by highly qualified, very technical people, who know exactly how many shovelfuls equate to one millionth of a reservoir?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I also recall the Minister's statement and was equally intrigued by it. I hope that my hon. Friend will explore it more deeply—regrettably the Minister is not present now to elaborate on it—because I believe that he also said that it would require no additional resources.

We are being offered a concept of a very skilled and delicate operation being performed without additional resources. I share my hon. Friend's concern about how to square that concept. Does he share my recollection?

12.30 pm

Mr. Jones: I think that my hon. Friend pre-empts me in getting to the dichotomy in the amendment which is a basic flaw in the Bill. The Minister has drawn to our attention the situation in Newcastle, where fluoride is added manually. I can picture it being shovelled in. I understand from what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health said last week that shovelling fluoride manually into reservoirs is supposed to be within a plus or minus 20 per cent. margin of error. Even then, a plus 20 per cent. margin is only 25 per cent. below the upper limit to which the Minister referred.

That is why I fail to see how the twin objectives in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the original Bill can be achieved. The first two paragraphs say:

"The Bill involves no additional public expenditure.

The Bill has no effect on public sector manpower."

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend has invented the concept of shovelling. One cannot shovel without a shovel. Who will buy the shovel? The shovel will cost money—far less than what is on it, or who uses it, or who measures what is on it. Everything will all be soaked up; it will be minute. It will be the most wonderful microcosm—a great substance in vast litres of water—gallons and miles of it. But who will pay for the shovel? If we get that right, we need not worry about the rest.

Mr. Jones: My hon. and learned Friend, I recall, has already tried to bring that point to the attention of the House. He has suggested that perhaps the necessary equipment will come free and the chemical will come free. I can see what he is getting at.

Mr. Best: I think that I can help my hon. Friend. I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment a parliamentary question:

"what is the method by which fluoride is added to water supplies; what safeguards are involved; what variations in the method exist in different parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement."

This is very germane. My hon. Friend may be interested in the reply;

"About 95 per cent. of fluoridation plants use hexafluorosilicic acid supplied as a 20 per cent. solution in water; the remainder use disodium hexafluorosilicate supplied as a powder.

All the plants using the acid have a 'day' tank which h about one day's requirement of acid, and can be filled only in any 24-hour period. At small waterworks the acid is di with water in an automatic failsafe chemical diluter. The ac the diluted acid is then injected into the water by a dosage p in proportion to the water flow through the works. The do pump is designed to work close to its maximum output. majority of plants have an automatic continuously recor fluoride monitor which signals an alarm or stops fluorid should the fluoride concentration in the water entering su start to exceed a preset value of between 1.2 mg/l 1.5 mg/l.

A few large manned works which store the water be supply rely on frequent manual sampling and analysis fluoride.

There are thus three safeguards to ensure that consumer not receive over-fluoridated water: the use of a 'day' tan controlled dosing pump operating near its maximum capa and monitoring arrangements, whether automatic not." — [*Official Report*, 4 March 1985; Vol. c. *349*.]

I do not know whether that assuages my hon. Frie fears.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). The answer contai substantial references to fail-safe machinery. Possibly latter part referred to the concept, which the Mini mentioned earlier, particularly in relation to Newcastle the manual addition of fluoride.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Perhaps in Newcastle chemical is added by a dosing machine, so the ide using shovels, which has been passing through Chamber recently, is quite unfounded.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, Nor Will the Minister be more precise? Does he m Newcastle upon Tyne, or Newcastle-under-Lyme?

Mr. MacKay: As a mere Scottish Minister, that difficult question. However, I think I am talking ab Newcastle upon Tyne. The chemical is added by a do machine. My hon. Friend read out the reply from my r hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health that fluoride in the water supply is measured manually ra than automatically. The addition is by automatic do machine.

Mr. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Dep Speaker. Although my hon. Friend the Under-Secretar State for Scotland is well liked and respected, welcome to the debate, he was talking about the situa in Newcastle, which, although it is north of Watfor understand is in England.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the h Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Marlow: Is it right and proper, within the rule the House and the constitution of the country, fo Scottish Minister to give his opinion on matters occur in England? If, during Scottish Question Time, or du a debate relating to Scotland, an English Minister sp from the Treasury Bench, there would be abso pandemonium.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a point argument, not a point of order.

Mr. Jones: I certainly would not want to follow point of order of my hon. Friend the Member

[Mr. Jones]

Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). Speaking for the capital city of Wales, I see little difference between England, the north of England and Scotland.

I am grateful for my hon. Friend the Minister's further explanation, suggesting that there is now machinery in Newcastle, although that is perhaps slightly contrary to the explanation that we were given earlier. However, I believe that, while machinery is used, the dosage addition is still done manually.

Mr. Fairbairn: I would not expect a Scottish Minister to realise that there is also a Newcastle in Scotland. How will the Minister ensure that subsection (5) is observed, whether by machine or otherwise, when the longer the pipe, the greater the concentration of fluoride? If it coagulates and drops off, we shall have a toxic dose. More importantly, how will subsection (5) be operated without any increase in manpower?

Mr. Jones: That is not a question for me, but for the Minister. However, perhaps we are clarifying matters. The shovelling might not be so widespread as I feared. Following my hon. and learned Friend's point about costs, I was wondering whether further economies could be made without shovelling the stuff. If it was the powder to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn referred, perhaps the powder was in sacks which were thrown into the reservoir, and it was by a critical tecnical process that the disintegration of the paper sack achieved the dilution of one millionth part in water to plus or minus 20 per cent.

The last part of amendment No. 4 contains the crucial phrase:

"without employing directly or indirectly, additional manpower."

That provision refers back to the two last paragraphs in the explanatory and financial memorandum.

Hon. Members may recall that I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), to pursue the real costs involved. I sought to question him about the costs incurred in illegal operations. I asked him to give me a projection of the costs that would arise if this enabling Bill were enacted and those operations became legal and expanded.

My hon. Friend the Minister neglected the fact that a negative cost is involved. At present, the illegal operations involve costs in manpower, materials and supervision. The Bill will make those operations legal. If the Bill is not enacted, it follows that those operations will remain illegal. Surely no Government would countenance their continuance and they would cease, with dramatic savings in manpower and expenditure.

Mr. Best: Knowing how acute my hon. Friend usually is, I am surprised that he and other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have completely failed to grasp the significance of the amendment, which was so ably moved——

Mr. Fairbairn: Nonsense.

Mr. Best: I hear my hon. and learned Friend say, "Nonsense," but surely the purpose of the amendment is to safeguard existing employees. The provision that no further employees should be appointed implies that there are dangers for existing employees who handle fluoride. My hon. Friend probably knows that employees must be provided with protective clothing. Surely the amendment is designed to safeguard further people being taken on and put in danger. I should have thought that that intention was manifest.

Mr. Jones: Not only is it manifest, but for once in the excellent contributions of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn throughout this Tuesday—I believe that we are still technically in Tuesday — on Tuesday of last week and in the week before, he is plainly and unnecessarily stating the obvious.

I have grave doubts whether the twin objections of the dichotomy in the amendment can be achieved. I do not see how a statutory water undertaker can accede to an application and discharge its obligation without extra manpower and public expenditure. In the greater public interest we must ensure that, albeit as a last resort, if this rotten Bill is enacted it contains the amendment. We must do our best to see that extra manpower and expenditure are not involved.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend is still missing the point. Is he aware that in a parliamentary answer that I received on 5 March my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment told me:

"Water authorities' employees must be provided with protective clothing when they are involved in filling or emptying containers or bags of fluorine compounds. This consists of appropriate overalls, boots and gloves, together with respiratory protection and eye protection."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1985.]

The purpose of the amendment is to prevent any future employees from having to undergo such protection when handling a dangerous substance.

Mr. Jones: I appreciate the further extension that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn is making. I wish only that he could make it more succinctly. The Amendment Paper contains 111 amendments. I wish that we had the necessary time, at the right time of day, to go through more of the amendments than have been called. At present we must confine ourselves to amendment No. 4, about which I have grave doubts.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech, but is it not obvious to everybody—the House, the public and the press—that it will cost money and involve manpower? Why do the Government pretend otherwise?

Water Fluoridation Bill

12.45 pm

Mr. Jones: I shall not disagree with my hon. and learned Friend, because what he said is exactly what I tried to get out of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—a projection of the future increased costs if the present illegal operations were made legal, or the savings that could be achieved to the public exchequer if those illegal operations were stopped. The amendment cannot achieve a twin objective, but I tell my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that I intend to press the amendment to a Division, and I hope that it will be accepted, for the sake of the greatest public good.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The amendment has important implications for manpower, so I shall go into some detail on the implications that it may have for manpower in the various water authorities. To that end, I have obtained from the Vote Office the annual reports of all the water authorities, so that the House may consider them.

I shall deal first with the Anglian water authority. It is of particular interest to me because it covers my constituency. At 31 March 1983, that water authority employed 3,057 full-time permanent staff and 62 part-time permanent staff. One should consider the effects of the amendment on those numbers. One might imagine that the addition of fluoride to the water supply would not have an immense effect on them, but it might have a small effect. The Anglian water authority employs 70 temporary staff, making a total of 3,189.

The employment cost is of some interest, because it is a considerable burden on public spending. It amounts to £30,825,000—a very large sum. Overhead costs also have to be taken into account, as well as social security costs of £2,352,000, and even pensions costs of £2,810,000, making total employment costs of £35,987,000, less the sum attributed to capital schemes and rechargeable work.

I receive a number of letters from my constituents complaining about the recent large increase in the water rates imposed on them by the Anglian water authority, and I am worried about the effect of the Bill on the costs. It should be a matter of concern to all of us that the overall financial position of the Anglian water authority does not decline too much.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend explain, first, how the social security costs apply in the case of the Anglian water authority? I should have thought that one did not pay people not to throw fluoride in the water. Secondly, can my hon. Friend tell us about the implications for Scotland, or any Scottish water authority, of the cost of this absurd totalitarian operation?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. and learned Friend makes a fair point about the Scottish water authorities. As I said at the beginning of what I hope will be my very short remarks, I have all the reports of all the water authorities. I hope to arrive at the figures for Scotland shortly.

My hon. and learned Friend speaks with great knowledge of Scotland, which is an area I certainly want to include in my remarks about the manpower and financial implications of the Bill. The point that he makes about social security is interesting, although I am not sure what impact fluoridation would have on the social security costs of the Anglian water authority. I suspect that it would be minor.

I shall now deal briefly with the Severn-Trent water authority. *[Interruption.]* No, I do not want to detain the House any longer than necessary, but I am interested in the Severn-Trent authority because it covers my constituency——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: And High Peak.

Mr. Leigh: Yes, it includes High Peak. It is a wide-ranging water authority, running right across the country, as one might expect, from the Trent to the Severn.

The authority's turnover is extremely large—some £341,778,000. I am trying to find out the manpower implications of fluoride on an authority with a turnover of that figure. I have no doubt that they will be considerable. It cannot be said—it is brought home by the amendment—that if a water authority imposes the fluoridation of its water, it will not have some impact on the number of its employees. I have before me an analysis of total numbers of employees and employee costs in the Severn-Trent water authority, which is set out in note 19 on page 12 of the document. The figures are of great interest.

The number of full-time permanent staff employed by the Severn-Trent authority is given as 4,935; of part-time permanent staff, 72, and of temporary staff, 106. That gives a total of 5,113 employees. Those figures relate to 1982, but it is possible that as a result of the pressure being put on water authorities to put fluoride in the water, the numbers may increase, although by the year 1983-84 the number had gone down, being listed for that year as, full-time permanent staff, 4,833; part-time permanent, 77 and temporary, 77. The numbers now employed by the authority total 4,987.

I do not think it will be possible for an authority to put fluoride in the water without employing more staff. It affects all those who pay water rates to the Severn-Trent authority, which is wide-ranging and covers the constituencies of a number of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) is in his seat and may wish to comment on water rates and the manpower implications of the amendment.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am not sure whether I am fully awake. I hope that I am not. I am not sure where High Peak is. The water authority of which my hon. Friend is either boasting or complaining, has 4,833 employees already, in other words, it is an authority which says to itself, "Hurrah, let us employ people to do nothing". If it has to put in fluoride it will employ 10,487.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. and learned Friend makes an interesting point.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak would be interested in the employment costs for the financial year. Large sums of public money are already being spent on staff, and I do not think it would be possible for fluoridation not to have some impact on employment costs.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Perhaps I should declare an interest. I am secretary of the GMBATU group of Members of Parliament. That union organises the workers in the water industry. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) who just made an intervention is obsessed, among other things, with a reduction in manpower in the public services. He ought to be aware that the story of the water authorities is one of reductions in staff over recent years because of modernisation of methods. Every water authority has reduced its manual work force.

In a situation where water authorities will be forced to increase their manpower temporarily to cover safety requirements it is irresponsible of Conservative Members to argue that in no circumstances should any water authority have the right to increase its manpower. That is utterly irresponsible. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross is frequently irresponsible, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) would want to be responsible in his contribution.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman makes some reasonable points. I would be the first to pay tribute to the way in which water authorities in recent years, no doubt with Government guidance and prompting, have succeeded in reducing staff. I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me for saying this but I am worried about the amendment for that very reason. It is undoubtedly important to employ staff to maintain safety standards if fluoride is to be put in the water. In my short remarks today I wish to look at the manpower implications of putting fluoride in the water. I was dealing with employment costs.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I feel that I should first tell my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that High Peak is south of Manchester and includes Buxton, Glossop, Whaley Bridge, New Mills, Chapel-en-le-Frith and 32 villages. With regard to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), I believe that there will have to be an increase in manpower. In the north we shall welcome that, as we could do with a reduction in unemployment. Since we are taxing water it would be rather nice to see something beneficial coming out of water, at least in terms of jobs even if it is water that we do not particularly want to drink.

I should like to remind my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle that on either the first or the second time that the Government tried to introduce this Bill—I do not think that it was the third time—I think the Minister for Health said that the Government would accept monitoring. That would also involve extra staff. There were proposals to monitor fluoride levels. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle knows that the studies that have been carried out in the United States show a massive variation in fluoride levels from house to house and area to area in towns even when it has been tried scientifically to make it one part per million. In some areas it has been above two and three parts per million, which is well above the recommended safe level.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak in his usual thoughtful way makes an interesting point. I know that he speaks with great experience as an industrialist. No doubt as an industrialist he has been worried about the imposition of higher water rates. He has devoted his life to trying to improve job prospects and is now devoting himself to improving the water supply and the prospects for his constituents. I know that he will be concerned about the implications for the Severn-Trent authority water rates.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross made an interesting point earlier about social security costs. I do not know what the impact of the amendment will be on the social security costs of the Severn-Trent authority, but staffing costs alone already amount to the staggering sum of £3,711,000. That is a large enough imposition on the public purse, but when I add that the total social security costs stand at £6,923,000, the House will understand the concern about the impact that fluoridation may have.

1 pm

The authority's total employment costs are £99,308,000, manual workers accounting for £43,409,000 and staff for £55,899,000. That is less the sum attributable to capital schemes. Will such schemes be needed to put fluoride in the water? The accounts also relate to rechargeable works, and I am not sure what effect fluoridation will have on those. But because the sum that I mentioned earlier is less the sum attributable to them the total amount chargeable to profit and loss account in the Severn-Trent authority is £48,078,000 for staff alone. I should not have thought, though, that fluoridation would have much effect on the staff. Presumably it is mainly a manual operation. The costs of manual workers will be £35,334,000, chargeable to profit and loss account. The total is £83,412,000.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak, who is still in his place, will forgive me if I now deal with Yorkshire. The many hon. Members who represent Yorkshire constituencies will be interested in the implications of the Bill and the amendment on manpower, safety and health, a subject that takes up a considerable part of the report from the Yorkshire water authority. The report gives the number of employees, both permanent and temporary, on 31 March 1982, 1983 and 1984, converting full-time employees into full-time equivalent numbers.

It is, admittedly, unfortunate that such reports, which are a matter of considerable public interest, do not deal more fully with the impact of fluoridation on staffing. However, it is interesting to note that on 31 March 1982 the Yorkshire water authority employed 3,030½ permanent staff. That is an extraordinary figure.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have reached such a stage in this long debate that I cannot follow what my hon. Friend is saying. It is my fault, because I am exhausted, although I wish to speak. I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Not just at the moment.

Mr. Leigh: I regret the discourtesy of my hon. Friend in interrupting me when I was trying to inform the House of some very important facts.

Mr. Fairbairn: If my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle had been up all night he might understand the rather flaccid condition of our hon. Friend. But some of us have been doing this sort of thing for so long that we do not worry about it.

My hon. Friend has given us some figures about the Yorkshire authority's staffing. I must admit that my grandmother was a Yorkshirewoman, so I am not all bad. But my hon. Friend says that there are 3,000 employees in this water authority and 4,333 in the last one that he mentioned. How does the water authority, which I imagine is smaller, employ 1,000 more than the others? Can my hon. Friend justify that? If he cannot, will he say what the Government will do if the amendment is made? My guess is that those smaller water authorities that employ far more people than they need will take the view that this is a marvellous opportunity for jobs for the boys, and poor old Yorkshire will have only two others shovelling the fluoride into the water.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. and learned Friend is wrong. The Severn-Trent water authority is large, and covers much of the country from the lower Severn, from as far south-west as Gloucester — including Tewkesbury, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Stoke-on-Trent, Coventry and Derby—and, in its most north-eastern corner, it covers Gainsborough in Lincolnshire.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend cannot have it both ways. Either the Yorkshire water authority is so minute that it does not justify 3,000 employees, or the other marvellous place that he mentioned does not justify 4,333 employees? Which does he mean? He must justify one or the other. Either one is overstaffed and the other overstaffed, or both are overstaffed. What are the implications of the amendment?

Mr. Leigh: Yes. I think that the implications of the amendment are worrying. However, I do not take my hon. and learned Friend's point about overstaffing. I beg to differ with him on that. The Severn-Trent water authority is a fine authority which has succeeded in reducing the number of employees. All water authorities have that record, and I should like to pay tribute to the fine public service that they provide. My hon. and learned Friend's intervention on this point did not have its customary——

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Finesse.

Mr. Leigh: Yes, finesse. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend does not mind my saying that.

It is extraordinary that there seems to be half an employee employed by Yorkshire water authority. Perhaps that has something specifically to do with Yorkshire. It is interesting that the number of temporary staff is only 98. That is fewer than the number employed by the Severn-Trent authority. The number of temporary staff may have to increase if the amendment is agreed to. That makes a total of 3,128½—the half member of staff has not gone from the total—employed at present by Yorkshire water authority. I correct myself: that figure applied at 31 March 1982.

I turn to 31 March 1984. I am pleased to tell the House that the half member of staff seems to have been excised from the accounts. In response to the hon. Gentleman's point, the number of permanent staff has declined to 2,910. That is a great achievement by Yorkshire water authority which ratepayers there will welcome. However, the authority will be worried about the impact of the Bill upon the numbers of staff that it will have to employ. That is listed under "Staff—others", which shows the figure of 3,085, with only 22 temporary staff.

The total permanent staff at present employed by the authority is 5,995. As last year's report makes clear, the staff figures for 31 March 1983 were considered artificially low at the time, because, prior to the reorganisation of April 1983, the authority had been cautious in recruiting. This left vacancies which later had to be filled. There were also new staff posts to be filled, and to set against the reduction of almost 300 which followed the reorganisation—including 60 new posts for the programme of renewing and refurbishing unlined cast iron mains. The House will wish to know that interesting statistic.

Much has been said in the debate about the damage that fluoride in mains may cause, although this has been denied. I am anxious about the possible impact of the Bill on the fine record and capital works of the Yorkshire water authority.

The report went on:

"The number of other employees continued to fall as the authority introduced more productivity payment schemes."

That is an interesting point and I am sure that my hon. Friend will be anxious to try to ensure that there is more productivity in water authorities. If fluoride is put into water that may help productivity, but somehow I doubt it.

The report stated:

"As envisaged in the report on reorganisation, a new structure created the opportunity to develop better management information systems".

Management information is most important and the water authorities have been criticised on occasions for not putting their views across and informing the public. However, lately they have had a good record of informing the public of their policies. Of course, there is still great public concern about fluoride.

The report continues:

"and by using that information to plan for increased efficiency. By the end of the year a number of cost saving initiatives were being considered which will reduce manning levels during the next performance aims period which ends in 1987."

Clearly, the Yorkshire authority hopes and intends to reduce staff, but in view of the amendment we cannot be certain that it will succeed in its excellent aim. The report mentions training and explains that the authority is playing a leading role in taking part in the Government's youth training scheme. However, I do not wish to go into that matter but to stick strictly to the manpower consequences. Therefore, I shall deal briefly with the manpower implications of the amendment on the Welsh water authority, which will be of interest to all hon. Members.

I am now dealing with the Welsh authority's employee numbers and costs. The full-time permanent staff employed by that authority in 1983-84 stood at 2,442. That is an interesting point and I am sorry that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross is not present because earlier we had a slight disagreement about the numbers employed and I believe that he made the point that too many were employed by the Severn-Trent

[Mr. Leigh]

authority. However, I am delighted to tell the House that Wales, which, although I have not visited it recently, is, obviously, a very large area with considerable responsibilities for the provision of water, has succeeded in employing a total of only 2,442 staff. That is a fine achievement on the part of the Welsh water authority.

However, I return to the point. Will the Bill have an impact on the numbers employed by the Welsh water authority, which has made great progress since 1982? In 1982-83, the number of staff employed by that authority stood at 2,558. That figure relates to full-time permanent staff and its manual staff stood at 2,625. I repeat that this is an interesting point but I should not think that whether an authority puts fluoride in water would have much impact on staff numbers although it may have one on the number of manual workers. That is of great interest in relation to the amendment because I believe that we are concerned about manual workers. Those figures give a total of 5,183 full-time and temporary staff employed.

I am sure that other hon. Members will want to deal with that point because the amendment would have an impact on the numbers of temporary staff. The annual report reveals that the Welsh water authority has a fine record, and I believe that the whole House will wish to pay tribute to it. I am glad to see my hon. Friends from Welsh constituencies in their places because they have consistently put forward the case for low water rates. I know that they are concerned about the impact that fluoride may have and they may later wish to intervene in my speech to raise particular points relating to Wales.

1.15 pm

I am dealing with the Welsh water authority. I was discussing the number of temporary staff, and I note that in 1983-84 the Welsh water authority employed 176. It is unfortunate that when the number of temporary staff is listed in the accounts, they do not mention how many of those temporaries are involved in fluoridation. Hon. Members are worried about those who are concerned with putting fluoride in water, but there were 176 temporary employees in 1983-84, but that number has decreased. I am sure that Welsh Members will be glad to know that the number of temporary staff employed by the Welsh water authority is now only 163. My mathematics are not good, but that shows a significant reduction.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: It is 13.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) says that it is 13. I do not know whether he has managed to work out the percentages in his head—that may be more difficult. However, it shows that he has an impressive grasp of mathematics.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am pleased to see my hon. Friend taking such an interest in the Welsh water authority as I am sure he followed with great interest the Welsh day debate that we had in the Chamber last Thursday.

Does my hon. Friend accept that my constituents in Cardiff, North and, indeed, all constituents in the 38 Welsh constituencies, do not want the costs of the Welsh water authority to increase, whether for manpower on fluoride or anything else? Our constituents would prefer to see the costs of the Welsh water authority fall by eliminating the present fluoridation schemes in Wales. Costs could be saved if those activities did not continue.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is well known for standing up for the water ratepayers in his constituency and in Wales generally. The knowledgeable and thoughtful points that he makes will wing their way back to the main newspapers in Wales. I know that he is concerned—as I am—that if we pursue the policy of fluoridation, the excellent record of the Welsh water authority and other water authorities in decreasing staff may decline.

I have been quoting figures, but the public do not really understand figures too well. It is interesting to note that the total cost of the wages and salaries of the Welsh water authority in 1983 was £26,057,000, which is a considerable sum. I am sorry that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross is not here as I know that he is very interested in social security costs. The social security costs of the Welsh water authority were £2,014,000 and pensions costs were £2,450,000. I am not sure what the impact of fluoridation will be on pension costs, but if a water authority must take on more staff—perhaps detailed specialists—that could have an impact on pension costs. Therefore, employment costs totalled £30,521,000. That figure is less the sum attributable to capital schemes and chargeable works which is £4,078,000, with a chargeable profit and loss account of £26,443,000.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend and am most interested in what he is saying. Is he aware that some years ago, home rule fanatics in Wales threatened terrorist activity against the water supply? Is there not a danger that if the measure is passed there may be an increase in such terrorist activity against the Welsh water supply which would increase running costs?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point but I do not wish to comment, as my knowledge of Welsh politics is not up to it.

I shall refer briefly to the Wessex water authority. I am not sure whether any of the hon. Members in the House at present represent Wessex seats. However, this matter will be of interest to hon. Members generally whether the amendment is accepted or not. Wessex water authority is a large authority and covers a considerable area from Bristol to Bournemouth, Poole and Dorchester, and includes Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Salisbury.

It is interesting to note that 1,202 full-time permanent staff were employed by the Wessex water authority on 31 March, although I am not sure how many were involved in the process of putting fluoride in water. That very large water authority employs a very small number of staff. I do not know whether that is due to the fact that the area is mainly a Conservative part of the country. No doubt the representatives of the water authority are concerned with cutting staff and Conservatives will be especially concerned that the number of staff does not increase. There will be concern about the impact of the Bill on the number of staff.

Only 10 part-time permanent staff are employed by the water authority and the number of temporary staff is 8. Again, the number of temporaries employed is lower than in other water authorities. I cannot give the number of temporary staff engaged in fluoridation of water.

Mr. Forth: In his riveting presentation to the House my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) put the thought into my head and

I suspect, those of other right hon. and hon. Members that it might be a good idea if water authorities were asked in future, especially in the context of this legislation, to include in their annual reports details of the number of employees and, therefore, the cost of fluoridation of water. My hon. Friend has expressed the view several times—I agree with him on this matter—that we are unable to extract from the annual reports and accounts the exact cost and resource element of fluoridation. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the House might make a recommendation, if not a statutory obligation, to water authorities to include such information in future reports?

Mr. Leigh: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend, who made a very fair point. I have gone through the reports in great detail and I have been concerned that, although clearly some staff are involved in the fluoridation process, the accounts do not list them. Those members of the public who are concerned about their water rates and about fluoride being put into water will want to know the exact cost and the number of staff involved. That is an important point.

I want to turn to a very important authority. The Thames water authority covers a considerable area of the south-east and will be of interest to the House. It covers Swindon, Banbury, Marlborough, and extends from the west to Reigate and Crawley. I do not see my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) in the Chamber, but I know that he was here earlier and that he is interested in this matter.

A considerable proportion of this document is concerned with the manpower of the Thames water authority. It says that this is the significant event of the year affecting industrial relations, with the abolition of the National Water Council. The sponsors of the amendment should address themselves to this important point and I hope that the Government will take cognisance of it.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

We are now at an appropriate stage of the proceedings when the House should have the opportunity to consider whether, bearing in mind the relevance of the hour, we wish to continue further debate on this Bill or to debate the business set down for Wednesday 6 March. Purely on the basis that it may be a convenient opportunity now for the House to take that decision, I beg to move.

Mr. Marlow: It would be irresponsible of the House to prevent Wednesday's business from being considered. Many hon. and right hon. Gentlemen are exhausted. We are discussing an important issue. The Minister has made many important points. Many hon. Members who will be speaking to later amendments wish to consider the matter and to do further research. The best thing that we can do today is to adjourn the debate and hear Wednesday's business. We can return to the debate at a later stage. I beg to move, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is the question before the House. It is now debatable.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): The Opposition are not in favour of the closure at this time, although it is true that we have been discussing the issue for a considerable period. More hon. Members are coming into the Chamber now and are taking a new-found interest in the matter. It is wholly appropriate for those individuals to have the opportunity to speak if they so wish. We all have priorities in our work and in many instances people are now able to devote more time to it. Pressing matters which might have been debated today will probably involve many hon. Members in the preparation of speeches which they would not have been capable of making without copies of the Bridge report. The tardy way in which that has been made available has enabled individual Members to divide their time clearly. Hon. Members are now coming into the Chamber and we can expect the debate to go on for some time.

I do not wish to use the word hypocritical, but it is difficult to find any other word that would adequately describe the attitude of Conservative Members who, having held up the proceedings of the House for a considerable time, now wish to terminate it because it suits their purpose. If it were not for the fact that Conservative Members in large measure form a section of the awkward squad, I would have suggested that they may have been got at by the Whips. I am led to believe that that is not the case and so far as this matter is concerned, their integrity is unsullied.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I wonder whether the hon. Member should assume that any Conservative Member wants to draw stumps or even imagines that there is the remotest chance of stumps being drawn at this stage, because we know that there are others who do not want to draw stumps. The hon. Gentleman might like to bear in mind the fact that voting takes 15 minutes. The time does not have to be filled with speaking.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention. I am not quite sure what he intended by it, but Opposition Members would be happy for the debate to continue for as long as necessary. My colleagues and I will be joining those who oppose the closure as and when an opportunity to vote on the matter arises. Until then, we await information of a more substantial nature from Conservative Members.

Mr. John Patten: Perhaps it might be appropriate for me to draw to the attention of the House that thus far we have had a very interesting debate. Those who have been in the Chamber throughout the debate, as so many right hon. and hon. Friends have been, will not need that drawn to their attention. The debate has been very level-headed and good tempered and I pay tribute to my colleagues and to right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition for the way in which the debate has been conducted.

We have made considerable progress in the debate. It is manifestly clear that everyone to whom I have listened is well aware of the issues. They have discussed the issues crisply and clearly and the debate is making good progress. We are now in the fourteenth hour of the debate. It is going well and good progress is being made. We in Parliament are working while the shops and offices of the nation are working. It is appropriate for us to be discussing these issues and to give ourselves the chance during what remains of today's Sitting to examine the issues at greater length.

We are not far from the end of our consideration of the amendments. It would be a disservice to the House if the Government recommended that we should report progress

[Mr. John Patten]

at this stage, draw stumps, and discuss the matter on another occasion. It would be much more appropriate to go on and complete the discussion.

1.30 pm

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All I ask is for the House to be given the right to vote on the issue now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. The Question is before the House.

Mr. Greg Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said that he thought that Conservative Members had been got at by the Whips. That is an outrageous suggestion, which impugns our honour. I invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for me.

Mr. O'Neill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was careful not to say that; I said that the thought had passed through my mind, but I had dismissed it from my mind. I am afraid that the length of the debate may be such that some hon. Gentlemen are not paying their usual attention.

Mr. Knight: I accept that explanation.

Question put, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned:—

The House divided: Ayes 48, Noes 196.

Division No. 147] **[1.31 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Blackburn, John
Budgen, Nick
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conway, Derek
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hayward, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McNamara, Kevin
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Norris, Steven
Park, George
Parris, Matthew
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Rost, Peter
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Williams, Rt Hon A.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Barron, Kevin
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fisher, Mark
Fletcher, Alexander
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freud, Clement
Galley, Roy
George, Bruce
Golding, John
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hordern, Peter
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & B*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Grego
Maclennan, Robert
McQuarrie, Albert
McTaggart, Robert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbrid*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grim*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Cheste*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdg*
Pavitt, Laurie
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dove*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb*
Shelton, William *(Streath*
Shepherd, Colin *(Herefor*
Shersby, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfas*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Cald*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David

Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. John Cope *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 140, Noes 87.

Division No. 148] **1.42 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bright, Graham
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freud, Clement
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hordern, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclennan, Robert
McQuarrie, Albert
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Ian Lang.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Beith, A. J.
Blackburn, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
George, Bruce
Golding, John
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Norris, Steven
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Terlezki, Stefan
Thornton, Malcolm
Wainwright, R.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 60, Noes 156.

Division No. 149] **[1.53 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Beith, A. J.
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Donald

Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Irving, Charles
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Marlow, Antony
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Norris, Steven
Parris, Matthew
Penhaligon, David
Randall, Stuart
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thornton, Malcolm
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Couchman, James
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Fletcher, Alexander
Forrester, John
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freud, Clement
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Golding, John
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Major, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
O'Neill, Martin
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shersby, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihul*
Thompson, Donald *(*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon Jo
Waldegrave, Hon Will
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jon
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

POWER TO VARY PERMITTED FLUORIDATION AC

Mr. Golding: I beg to move amendment No page 3, line 2, leave out from 'instrument' to en 3 and insert

'subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses of P after a full report has been given to Parliament thre previously on the tests carried out on the new substan

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be co to discuss the following amendments:

No. 10, in page 3, line 2, leave out from 'to' t line 3 and insert

'approval by resolution of the House of Commons.'

No. 78, in page 3, line 3, leave out 'either Ho insert 'both Houses'.

Mr. Golding: I was shocked to see that am No. 46 had been selected. One has only to k background to its tabling to understand why. Last I tried to speak in debates on fluoridation. I rush from Southend and arrived at 10.50 pm. The clo moved and I could not speak. I left the House an of petrol. I bought petrol and ran into a fog. At 2 home.

When I got home, worse even than my wife wa me, I had toothache. I could not sleep. Instead I in my favourite pastime—writing amendments So it was a shock to find the amendment Amendment Paper. I thought, "That is c sophisticated and subtle." It was a shock to find it solely in my name. I wonder why no other hon. has thought fit to add his name to mine. Perh because it is too sophisticated, complex and dif others.

Mr. Forth: I can put the hon. Gentleman's rest. Such is the respect in which he is held by ri and hon. Members throughout the House that confident that such would be his skill, abi persuasiveness in dealing with the amendmen would be totally superfluous for other right hon.

Members to add their names to the amendment. We could all repose in the knowledge that he would fully discharge his responsibilities to the House in bringing forward the amendment. He can be assured of the support of many hon. Members on both sides in so doing.

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* I would never make that hon. Gentleman my PPS. His judgment is totally at fault. When I examined the amendment last night, I found that I did not understand it. One of my difficulties this afternoon—one that I often face—is that I have to persuade not only Conservative Members but myself. It is a complicated subject. I am hoping that the Chief Whip for the Liberals, the only person here who I know understands the procedures to which I am referring, will from time to time help me out.

"Erskine May" is clear on the subject of parliamentary control of statutory instruments. It states:

"The conditions of the making of statutory instruments and the degree of parliamentary control over them will depend in each case upon the particular statute which authorizes them, though there is at present no consistent pattern or direct connection between the subject matter of any particular instrument and the procedure to which it may be subjected".

Those are the words of Erskine May. In my words, it is the usual parliamentary model.

Mr. Fairbairn: I know that the hon. Gentleman is not a lawyer, but it would be helpful if he would tell us which passage in "Erskine May" he was quoting.

Mr. Dobson: Get your trousers pressed.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman was saying from a sedentary position. If I get anything pressed it will be his head.

Would the hon. Gentleman be good enough to give the page and paragraph reference for the passage he quoted in the latest edition of "Erskine May", if the hon. Gentleman has the latest edition. Some of us have been in the House so long that we may have older editions. I shall be obliged if he can give us the reference, and do everthing he can to press and suppress the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Golding: I always write quotations from memory. I am not certain that I have the right page number—in one edition it is page 577. "Erskine May" explains that:

"Under one type of procedure the resultant instrument has no effect, or no continuing effect, until Parliament has expressly approved it."

That is what I want. I want express approval.

On page 577 "Erskine May" says:

"Under another type it can be annulled if, within a time-limit, either House records its disapproval; the address to Her Majesty praying that an instrument be annulled is colloquially termed a 'prayer'."

"Erskine May" sets out the affirmative and negative procedures and says that they are "exempted business".

Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do I insist on the affirmative procedure as I do in the amendment? One difference between the two procedures is in the laying. On page 578 "Erskine May" says:

"What constitutes laying must be a matter for the decision of each House. In 1948, however, the Laying of Documents before Parliament (Interpretation) Act was passed 'for the removal of doubt'. It declared that statutory references to the laying of instruments or other documents before either House are (unless the contrary intention appears) to be construed as references to the taking, during the existence of a Parliament, of such action as, under the Standing or Sessional Orders or other directions of that House, or under the practice of that House, constitutes laying, notwithstanding that the action can be taken at a time when the House is not sitting."

The important point is that a negative order can be laid when the House is not sitting.

When the Government have lost their business today through the miserable incompetence of the Government Whips, the failure of the Leader of the House and the outstanding brilliance of the Opposition Chief Whip, one consequence will follow. It will be a minor result, but hon. Members will be able to go home. A more important point is that negative orders will still be able to be laid.

Mr. Marlow: The Government have lost their business, despite attempts by Conservative Members to give them an opportunity to take the rest of today's business on another day and therefore keep today's business, largely because the hon. Gentleman was stuck outside the Lobby trooping and dragooning Labour Members into the Lobby to support the Government and so lose the business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should come to the terms of the amendment.

Mr. Golding: We are precisely on——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must come to the terms of the amendment and not discuss the Chief Whips or the previous business.

Mr. Golding: It was an aside, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are addressing the terms of the amendment when we discuss the differences between the conditions under which one can lay negative and affirmative orders. When the House has gone to rest, affirmative orders cannot be laid, but negative orders can be.

Standing Order No. 141 says:

"Where, under any Act of Parliament, a statutory instrument is required to be laid before Parliament, or before this House, the delivery of a copy of such instrument to the Votes and Proceedings Office on any day during the existence of a Parliament shall be deemed to be for all purposes the laying of it before the House:

Provided that nothing in this order shall apply to any statutory instrument being an order which is subject to special parlimentary procedure or to any other instrument which is required to be laid before Parliament, or before this House, for any period before it comes into operation."

Dr. M. S. Miller: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I pay tribute to his erudition and ability to wade through parliamentary procedure.

Irrespective of whether we are dealing with the negative or affirmative procedure, when the time comes for my hon. Friend to tell us about the amendment, will he also tell us what the new substance is? I should like to know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the House, not just his hon. Friend.

2.15 pm

Dr. Miller: Will my hon. Friend also tell us whether it is the case that tests should be carried out on substances before they are put in water? Would it not be better for him to ask that the water into which the fluoride has been placed is tested? My hon. Friend's point about the affirmative and negative procedure is valid, but the rest of the amendment is a mess. Perhaps he will tell us exactly what he is getting at.

Mr. Golding: I shall come to the mess later. I hope that my hon. Friend will have time to listen to all the compounds that I shall list. I may have to write to him.

Mr. John Patten: Will the hon. Gentleman lay a copy of it in the Library?

Mr. Golding: Under Standing Order No. 141—I see hon. Members taking the Standing Orders out of their pockets——

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The Minister put a serious point to my hon. Friend. Will he, or will he not, lay a copy of his letter in the Library?

Mr. Golding: The odds are that if I write him a letter it will fall out of my pocket in the Central Lobby, in the Members' Lobby or in the Library. I therefore cannot say whether it will be laid in the Library, the Central Lobby or the Members' Lobby.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not understand what being laid in the Central Lobby, or wherever, means. I do not know whether it is negative or affirmative, but I am anxious to discover the hon. Gentleman's views. If one is spread-eagled on the Floor of the House, not in the Lobby or the Corridor, not laid, but spread-eagled, is that negative or affirmative?

Mr. Golding *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman replies, he will be out of order. He had better get back to the amendment.

Mr. Golding: I agree with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would be out of order if I were to tell the hon. and learned Gentleman to consult his manservant Blott to find out the answer.

If, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will take out of your pocket the Standing Orders which you always carry with you and look at Standing Order No. 141, you will see that it says:

"the delivery of a copy of such instrument"—

a statutory instrument, but not a draft instrument—

"to the Votes and Proceedings Office on any day during the existence of a Parliament shall be deemed to be . . . laying".

As a matter of practice, instruments are not normally laid on Saturdays, Sundays, bank holidays, Good Friday or Christmas day. It does not say that they cannot be laid.

What matters is the sneaky way in which certain Governments — Conservative Governments, never Labour Governments—lay instruments when nobody is watching. They can do that under the negative procedure. It is interesting that the one day that is left out is Christmas eve. I believe that it has been left out on purpose—so that Governments can lay statutory instruments without anybody finding out about them.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman is being rather personal. He knows perfectly well, he has known for years, that my birthday happens to be on Christmas Eve. Equally, he knows perfectly well that I was an Easter present from my father to my mother and a Christmas present from my mother to my father.

Mr. Golding: There is a difference in the way that the papers are presented in the House of Lords. It is also different in respect of affirmative orders.

The negative order procedure is always hit and miss, depending on whether hon. Members know that there is something to pray against. "Erskine May" tells us:

"The laying of statutory instruments on the table of the House of Commons means in practice that the paper, having been delivered to the Votes and Proceedings Office"—

I wonder whether any hon. Member knows Votes and Proceedings Office is? Perhaps I co later—

"is placed in the Library of the House of Com document is usually (though not always) laid in accordance with a direction of the Speaker."

I heard hon. Members speaking earlier abou of experience as Ministers. I had a short, experience as a Minister—traumatic for the and traumatic for the rest of the Government. I if one wanted to make certain that no one ever one was doing in government, the best cou answer a parliamentary question telling the ho that something had been placed in the Library o of Commons. One could be almost certain th Member would ever take the trouble to lo parliamentary answer was timed right. Ans question on 23 December and placing the docu House of Commons Library on 24 December wo a straight run. It is all a matter of hit and miss. of the disadvantages of the negative procedure

Hon. Members are told about negative instru not in a form that allows them to know what is Since 1954 Governments have always put 50 instruments and drafts subject to the negative re the Vote Office when they are laid. "Erskine

"The arrangements for notifying Members of wh laid are as follows. In the House of Lords notice ap Minutes of Proceedings, and the papers themselves for inspection in the Printed Paper Office. When pa in the House of Commons, notice appears in the dail Proceedings. Separate lists of statutory instrumen published fortnightly in the House of Lords and w House of Commons, showing all the instrument instruments against which negative motions can be m the statutory period, the date from which that period and the number of days unexpired."

I sat on the old Select Committee on Instruments. We used to get the list of instruments, their titles and numbers. One co them and find it impossible to tell from the title were about. Even after looking at an order one not tell what it was about. If an instrument negative procedure list, one would automatica that it was not of any great importance. That assumption to make. I was elected to the Hou and servd on the Statutory Instruments Comm 1969-70. My assumptions were wrong.

It is impossible for hon. Members to keep the delegated legislation: it is harder to keep u negative procedure than under the positive pro

Mr. Fairbairn: Having merely served on a Statutory Instruments Committee and not havi privilege of serving with the hon. Member, I I cannot remember what he means by having instrument and using it in a negative procedure enlighten me about that?

Mr. Golding: I have quoted the page r "Erskine May", which will tell the hon. a Member the precise difference between the n the positive procedures.

The problem with the negative procedure fo know what it is—I presume that I have lo and learned Member for Perth and Kinross at th I shall have lost a few more hon. Member that if one has not come to grips with it with it passes into law. It is most unsatisfactory that

law after the 40 day period unless one is right on top of the job. Perhaps the hon. and learned Member can make something of the phrase, "right on top of the job".

The procedure for affirmative orders is different and better. The standing order I have quoted does not apply to instruments relating to affirmative orders. They can be laid only on sitting days. They cannot be sneaked in.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman's point is fundamental and vital to the future of fluoride and its use in this country. Is he aware that the resolution can be made by either House of Parliament—not just this House with its democratic responsibilities, but by the other House? This order which could be laid in some nook or cranny of our Library need not be laid here at all but could be laid in one of the darkest recesses of their Lordships' Library. Their Lordships will not have these matters brought to their attention by their constituents because they do not have constituents. Is that not a matter of great concern? Would the hon. Gentleman like to tell the House that it is totally unacceptable?

Mr. Golding: It is not totally unacceptable to me. I have great faith in the House of Lords at present. Outside the local authorities and the town halls it is the only place where there are any Labour victories. I support the House of Lords. I shall come in a moment to Lord Shackleton's letter in *The Times* yesterday, which explains how much work is being done in the House of Lords. I feel shocked that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) takes this puritanical attitude against the House of Lords.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry if I gave the hon. Gentleman that impression. By having the order laid in only one House, which could be the House of Lords, this House, with our democratic responsibilities, would not be involved in future control of this issue. As the hon. Gentleman knows it is fundamental to the health and liberty of the individual citizen.

Mr. Golding: I do not understand that. Under the negative procedure, either House can annul the order. I should have thought that as an opponent of fluoridation, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) would want every order under the Bill to be annulled. Perhaps I should have spelled it out to him with my kiddies' kit. My objective in moving the amendment is to make it easier for both Houses to annul orders that Ministers are proposing to extend fluoridation.

2.30 pm

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When Dr. Kissinger used to whizz around the middle east, it was sometimes said that if it was Tuesday it must be Baghdad. Today if it is fluoride it is still Tuesday. Has the Leader of the House sought your permission to come to the House to explain what has happened to today's business and what he intends to do about the Interception of Communications Bill?

Mr. Beith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does not our inability to proceed with the Interception of Communications Bill—and the Leader of the House is not here to explain the position—reveal how much better it would have been if you, or another occupant of the Chair, had had the power to ensure that the proceedings on that Bill were adjourned with due notice so that hon. Members would have the opportunity to read the Bridge report? Instead, to cover their embarrassment the Government have connived at the removal of their own business from the Order Paper.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An independent, or at least independently minded, group of Conservative Members gave the House the opportunity to make its own decision about the conduct of today's business at approximately 1.25 pm. Will you guide us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and tell us whether my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House needs to tell us why we made our decision?

Mr. Fairbairn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you were in a position to do a bit of phone-tapping, you would know.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Do all hon. Members wish to raise similar points of order? If so, let me explain that it is not for me to ask Ministers to come to the House. We have an unlimited extension of proceedings, which is nothing new and certainly is not out of order.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Leader of the House has now entered the Chamber, will you tell us whether, when he passed your Chair, he asked permission to make a statement to the House about the loss of today's business and whether an opportunity will be given to clear the Lobbies and say our prayers together as a community?

Can you also tell us whether the Leader of the House has instructed his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to rewrite the infamous Bill that we were to consider today, to ensure proper democratic control of the Government's nefarious goings on?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. Ministers have heard what has been said and it is for them to take whatever action they consider necessary.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): If it will help progress with the business now before the House, let me explain that, as Wednesday's business has been lost, the matter must now be considered through the usual channels. I hope to make a statement indicating that it will be further considered.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends were promised copies of the Bridge report, and told that they would be available before the debate on telephone tapping. Will the Leader of the House find out whether those copies have been made available?

Mr. Biffen *indicated assent.*

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find myself in a peculiar position. I have been led to believe that today is still Tuesday, but Wednesday happens to be my birthday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the House wishes the hon. Gentleman many happy returns, but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dixon: As Wednesday 6 March is not in the parliamentary year, will the Leader of the House tell me what I should do with my birthday presents? In

[Mr. Dixon]

parliamentary terms my birthday has disappeared, because today's business has been talked out and we are still discussing yesterday's business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that I heard my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House say that tomorrow's business had been lost. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and other hon. Members look at the Division lists when the *Official Report* is published, I think that you and they will realise that it was a conscious decision of the Government and the Opposition to do away with tomorrow's business.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that we still have to continue the proceedings on a very important Bill. The hon. Gentleman knows that the matter that he has raised is not one for the Chair.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have noticed that when my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) put his point of order, the Leader of the House assented from a sedentary position. My point of order is simple. Is that assent recorded in *Hansard?* If not, will the Leader of the House come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement that is?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair does not notice anything that is said from a sedentary position. I did not notice what happened.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that just after midnight, the Committee proceedings of the Transport Bill were interrupted by hon. Members singing "Happy Birthday" to celebrate the birthday of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow. As, technically, Wednesday 6 March has never occurred, surely it was out of order for hon. Members to sing "Happy Birthday" in celebration of a birthday that had not yet taken place and will not take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is completely out of order in raising matters relating to Committee proceedings on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As Opposition Members are so scandalised by the Government's behaviour in conniving at losing Wednesday's business, may I suggest that the best way of making their protest is to continue today's business until 2.30 pm tomorrow, so that we can lose the following day's business as well.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the House did not make a proper statement. He merely assented from a sedentary position. This is serious. We have lost a day's business on a very important matter. It is worth pointing out that Conservative Members who were responsible for that have never done it on unemployment, education or the abolition metropolitan counties, but on water fluoridisati waste a parliamentary day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, that is not a order for the Chair.

Mr. Golding: I am a gambler. When gam always bet each way. That is why I have brought a copy of "Tapping the Telephone". Perhaps, Mr Speaker, you would like to ask hon. Members they want my speech on telephone tappin continuation of the speech about statutory instru

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock ar Valley): A bit of both.

Mr. Golding: It is almost certain to sound lik both, anyway.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I bow to t Gentleman's great knowledge of procedure. Wi whether the point made by my hon. Friend is c regards the orders being able to be laid in eithe It is not clear whether the order could be laid Houses but be voted on by a resolution of eithe Will the hon. Gentleman clarify that procedural

Mr. Golding: According to "Erskine May", carry around in my head but put on paper for conv "an Order or an instrument may be required to be lai before one or both Houses".

It would be helpful if the hon. Mem Northampton, North would carry "Erskine M him, because he continually challenges on p procedure which could be settled easily if he wer to open the pages of that book. That would save of the House. If he would look at the rules, he w the words:

"before one or both Houses, and not to be made and to h unless one or both Houses"—

the relevant words are "one or both"; Con Members have been trying to get me in a muddle, will not succeed—

"present addresses to the Crown praying for the Order t or have agreed to resolutions approving the draft inst

That is what is important. The Government m to both the Commons and the Lords and say, "He proposals, and until there is a positive vote we ca this legislation". That means, Mr. Speaker, that t actually tell you that the order exists and what it For that reason, if for no other, it is better to orders by affirmative resolutions.

There are drawbacks to the proposal. Standi No. 79 makes it clear in relation to a statutory in of the affirmative type that in the new Standing C on Statutory Instruments &c. a Minister may hi forward an affirmative order for approval, but it with the negative type. It may be that it is better the Floor.

It is unnecessary for me to spell out in deta reasons why the affirmative resolution proc preferable to the negative procedure. I believe hon. Members accept that, and that only Govern not. Governments come to the House and tell us not have the parliamentary time." That is the argument against the use of affirmative re However, the Government are proving today

have plenty of time and in a few hours' time they will declare a national Parliament half-day. We are all to be sent home and the evening is not to be spent in debate.

If the Government were to manage their business better, they could find time to debate these instruments.

Mr. Forth: As I believe that many hon. Members on both sides of the House have substantial contributions to make to this important debate, the hon. Gentleman is in danger of doing the House a disservice by putting into the minds of the business managers the very thought that our business today might be truncated in any way. Does he agree that that is most risky, and will he reconsider what he has just said and try to persuade the business managers on the Conservative Benches that they should have much more open minds about this issue and be prepared to let this business run to its necessary, obvious and serious conclusion, rather than attempt to truncate it in any way?

Mr. Golding: It will be for others to advise me. Of course, Adjournment debates could take place and we could see to what time they might go.

However, I must deal with the point of the other place, because the Bill is left to the discretion of either House and my amendment seeks to make it obligatory on both Houses.

Mr. Bell: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves his consideration of the matter in relation to the House of Commons, I hope that he will remind hon. Members that even if they were extremely efficacious in the pursuit of their job of following up the negative instruments, there is no guarantee whatever that they would be able to secure a vote on the Floor of the House or an effective vote in Committee against the negative instrument.

2.45 pm

Mr. Golding: I have to agree that the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. One difficulty of the affirmative procedure is that it is virtually impossible to do anything with it by either debate or vote on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can help me. The circumstances are somewhat unusual, in that it is not tomorrow, but yesterday. The debate has some time to go. Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House, as some organisation may be needed whether it is necessary to deal with the 10 o'clock motion tonight? Will it be necessary for hon. Members to attend to ensure that we can continue the debate after 10 pm, or, because our business is open-ended, will we proceed beyond 10 o'clock in any case?

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to know what day it is. It is Tuesday, and we have long since passed 10 o'clock. I had to teach the hon. Member about those matters when we debated the British Telecommunications Bill. I thought that he would have learnt that in these circumstances, it is Tuesday and we have passed 10 o'clock, so there can be no 10 o'clock motion tonight. However, I hope that my remarks are hypothetical.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have become increasingly confused.

Mr. Dobson: For the past 20 years.

Mr. Fairbairn: It has been many years since I managed to shrug off confusion, but the hon. Member has not helped. I have been gazing at that hideous clock for the past 24 hours, and I thought that when it said it was 10 o'clock, it must mean it. How many 10 o'clocks will there be before I can get rid of Tuesday?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that it would be right for me to answer the hon. and learned Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, in that we are in Tuesday's sitting and will remain in that sitting for the rest of today.

Mr. Golding: You are more expert than me on the rules, Mr. Speaker. However, after last night, I am probably more expert than you on the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). The reason why the clock appears to be confused is that it has been looking at the hideous hon. and learned Gentleman for the past 20 hours.

I refer to the other place, of which I am envious because of the television drama that emanates from there. I said that the Government are defeated only in the other place. I wrote that yesterday.

Mr. Fairbairn: Today.

Mr. Golding: I wrote it yesterday—Monday. Is it not possible to make a statement in the House without being hounded by people who are completely ignorant of my domestic arrangements? I wrote that sentence yesterday.

Mr. Fairbairn: Rubbish!

Mr. Golding: Let us look at the position today. The Government are in disarray. We expected to see the Secretary of State for the Environment, but, instead, we see a broken reed of a Leader of the House—a pathetic figure.

Mr. Speaker: Order. To keep the hon. Gentleman on the road, we should be interested to know whether he wrote it yesterday on the negative or affirmative procedure. We should be dealing with that and his amendment.

Mr. Golding: Oh No, Mr. Speaker — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am going rather faster than usual.

Mr. Fairbairn: I know that the hon. Gentleman is going faster than usual and I am very confused. May I be advised whether he has arrived at yesterday or tomorrow, or is it still today?

Mr. Golding: Today.

The amendment says "subject"—I did not deal with the word "subject"—"to affirmative resolution". I have dealt with the phrase "affirmative resolution".

When you were not watching, Mr. Speaker, and when Conservative Members were making a noise, I went on to talk about both Houses of Parliament. I explained that a resolution of both Houses is better than a resolution of either House because the matter will then have to go to the House of Lords. We can win the argument in the House of Lords, but we never seem to win in the House of Commons, until today. We have won in the House of Commons today, but usually we win only in the House of Lords.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that in normal circumstances the Opposition do not win arguments in this House. However, it will not have escaped his notice that Her Majesty's Government have not secured a majority of Conservative Members voting in their Lobby on a single Division on the Bill. Therefore,

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

if more of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends were present to vote against the Government, the Government would have been defeated in this House.

Mr. Golding: We cannot stand disloyalty to the party. My hon. Friends stayed in bed on my advice because I telephoned them and said that I had seen the most frightful sight — a young Conservative Member reading out private letters from Cabinet Ministers to their constituents. Admittedly those letters had been reneged on, but the fact that they had been written shook me. You will not believe this, Mr. Speaker, but I heard an account——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does it have anything to do with the amendment? The hon. Gentleman must stick to the amendment. I am the last person who wishes to be reminded of what has happened today.

Mr. Golding: The point is that the Conservative party in the House of Commons has been in such disarray over the past 24 hours that I want to make certain that the legislation can be sent to the other place.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): My hon. Friend, like me, is a former Whip. We like to know where we are going and the House usually likes to know where it is going. However, we are still in Tuesday. My hon. Friend is talking about legislation and the other place. What day is the House of Lords in now? Will my hon. Friend enlighten the House?

Mr. Golding: You know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a date-line across the middle of Central Lobby. If my hon. Friend does not show school parties the date-line across Central Lobby, what does he show them? Does not he say, "This is the line. On that side it is Tuesday in the House of Commons and on that side it is Wednesday in the House of Lords"? What do younger hon. Members do?

I ask whether the House of Lords will make time. When returning from a good meal my attention was drawn to a letter in *The Times* about how hard their Lordships worked. One of their Lordships showed that letter to me. Conservative Members will have read it over breakfast, but my copy of *The Times* comes from the Library. The letter was written by Lord Shackleton and was headed

"Longer labours in the Lords"

and stated

"In the Lobby Reporter's article of February 25 on 'MPs forced into more post-midnight sittings' it was suggested that, in contrast to the House of Commons, 'the House of Lords uses its expertise to avoid long hours'."

That laugh will be on the Lords tonight because we shall be at home when they are working. The letter continues:

"Alas, the suggestion that the Lords are able, by skilful management of business, to avoid late sittings is no longer true."

Then he details the hours:

"1956-57, average length of sitting, 3 hours 55 minutes. Average daily attendance 112."——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What has this got to do with the hon. Gentleman's amendment? It is not relevant. The hon. Gentleman is very experienced. I must ask him to return to his amendment or, if he is quoting from a letter, to make it relevant to his amendment.

Mr. Golding: I am trying to speak in shorthand. Normally I spell matters out. One thing is absolutely clear: the House of Lords, even though it may work longer, has the time to deal with delegated legislation. That becomes absolutely clear——

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that as well as the point made by Lord Shackleton anxiety has been expressed in the House of Lords, not least by my noble Friend Lord Hooson, and acknowledged from the Government Benches in that Chamber that the House of Lords needs to make a particular effort to deal with those negative instruments which have not been subject to proper debate or vote in the House of Commons? It has been openly admitted in the House of Lords that discussion must take place through the usual channels in that House to ensure that more work is done by the Lords on those statutory instruments which have not been adequately debated in the House of Commons.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I cannot hear a word that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is saying—not that I normally want to do so, but it might be useful if I could.

Mr. Golding: On a very serious point, the question asked by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was, cannot the Lords do more business in connection with the negative orders? The answer is yes. It obviously makes sense for the Lords to be dealing with affirmative orders as well.

Mr. Beith: Perhaps I can take the hon. Gentleman's argument further and assist the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) at the same time. Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that at present the practice in the Lords is not to vote on the statutory instruments? If the House of Commons continues to show such disregard for their debate and consideration, the practice in the Lords of not voting on them surely cannot continue.

Mr. Golding: I agree. I do not propose to talk about the reform of the House of Lords, but I believe in a working second Chamber and one that does what, inevitably, we neglect. Time can be found in the Commons, but I shall not talk about that.

I turn to what hon. Members have talked about as the deficiencies in my amendment. The first question concerns what I mean by a full report. Even the word "full" causes difficulty. I wrote the word "full" and then I decided to look up its meaning. I looked at the Oxford Dictionary.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): What does it say?

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman asks me what the Oxford Dictionary says about the word "full". It starts on page 588 and goes on to page 592. I was glad to get to the word "fullage". There are all kinds of things that I do not understand in those pages — Aryan roots, quotations from the year 1000, Anglo-Saxon, locutions, Sherlock Holmes, pigs and bacon. I got quite interested in it, but I thought that the Speaker would never permit it to be read.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Golding: Mr. Speaker, when you were taking consultations, a Conservative Member was daft enough to ask me to tell the House what the dictionary said about the word "full".

Mr. Forth: In an attempt to assist the hon. Gentleman to help the House and my hon. Friends, I suggest that he should accept as a synonym for "full" in this context the word "comprehensive", which may define more succinctly

and readily—without recourse to the dictionary—the meaning that he seeks. Indeed, if the hon. Gentleman would do that it would enable us to move on briskly.

Mr. Golding: The answer is no. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has said, the advantage of being on the Labour Benches is that one can always find an intellectual adviser. Once the word "comprehensive" was mentioned, I was immediately given the message—"it's ambiguous".

3 pm

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not understand such words as "comprehensive"; indeed, I find them nauseating. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will advise me, as an Englishman, and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) as a Scotsman, whether "full" means the same as "fou".

Mr. Golding: I do not know; that was also ambiguous. The hon. and learned Gentleman asked me whether I could advise him "as an Englishman". Does he mean himself "as an Englishman", or me "as an Englishman"?

As I knew, Mr. Speaker, that you would become impatient if I read the definition from the authoritative, longer edition of the OED, I consulted the shorter edition, where it appears on only a couple of pages. But again it is difficult to decide what "full" means. One definition reads: "(of heart etc.) overcharged with emotion".
No doubt if the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross were writing the definition, it would be "full" in that sense—"overcharged with emotion"! But if my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) were doing that the definition would be "Having within its limits all it will hold; having no space, empty".

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I suspect that my hon. Friend really means, in this context, the definition
"Having a rounded outline; large, swelling, plump, protuberant".
but he is too good a friend to specify those terms, in view of the problems that we have both had with our outlines!

Mr. Golding: What my hon. Friend is trying to say, in the language of the Potteries, is this: he is fat, I am thin. But he is a bit embarrassed about it.

However, I must admit that, after having written the word "full" in the amendment and then studying the dictionary, I am not satisfied that it is right.

Mr. Speaker: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the amendment which we are discussing is his own? He drafted it and presumably knows exactly what he means. We do not need to go into the various definitions of the word "full". The hon. Gentleman has merely to tell the House exactly what he means.

Mr. Golding: I must confess that after writing the amendment, when I came to read it I could not understand it.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, the obvious course is for the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment so that we can get on.

Mr. Golding: After appealing for help from other hon. Gentlemen, I find that the amendment has become——

Mr. McNamara: On a point or order, Mr. Speaker. Surely my hon. Friend cannot withdraw the amendment unless he has the leave of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I had better rephrase my remark, and say "seek leave to withdraw the amendment". All I am saying is that if the hon. Gentleman feels that his amendment is defective surely it is wasting the time of the House to proceed with it. There is a substantial amount of other business on the Order Paper for today; we have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. To be fair to my hon. Friend, he has been questioned by a Conservative Member about the meaning of the word "full". I believe that the House is entitled to a full description of what my hon. Friend means by the word "full". And I am sure that, in the fullness of time, he will give us that explanation.

Mr. Soames: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am desperately trying to make up my mind about the Bill. I cannot decide from what the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) is saying whether he is in favour of or against the Bill. I wish that you could urge the hon. Gentleman to parade the arguments so that we may make up our minds.

Mr. Speaker: All I am saying to the House is that the debate has been very interesting. I heard the Minister say that the debate had been full and interesting. However, we are now dealing with a very narrow amendment. I am merely asking the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) to deal with his amendment. I pulled him up because I heard him say that he thought it was defective. If that is so, there is an obvious course for him. But if, in retrospect, he feels that it is sound, perhaps he would put it to the House in the confident expectation that the House will make its judgment upon it.

Mr. Golding: While I was listening to the point of order my hon. Friends have told me that it is the best amendment that they have seen. I always have that experience.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) withdrew amendment No. 46, would we then continue by debating amendments Nos. 10 and 78?

Mr. Speaker: No. However, there is a Third Reading debate. All that is in the Bill may then be discussed, as is normal on a Third Reading debate. *[Interruption.]* Order. If I sense the mood of the House, that is what the majority of hon. Members wish to do.

Mr. Golding: I should be interested to see a hand vote on that. My fault is that I am too modest. In my experience, those who move amendments might put them to the vote, but even though Ministers might accept them, they often say that the drafting is defective but that they will put that right in another place. That has been common in my experience. The only difference is that it is not the mover of an amendment who acknowledges a slight blemish, but the Minister who points it out.

I have read the Standing Orders and *Erskine May* very carefully. I consulted a previous Speaker on this. Nowhere in the Standing Orders is it laid down that an hon. Member speaking in the House of Commons must know what he or she is talking about. If there were such a rule, there would be silence. *[Laughter.]* Perhaps the rules have changed, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Golding]

I demand that a full report be given to Parliament "three months previously". Why three months? I do not know. That figure was pulled out of the air. It is probably the length of the closed season in fishing. It is something of that sort.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I think that the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) has skipped a point in his argument. He gave us a full explanation of what he meant by the word "full", but he has not said what he means by the word "report".

Mr. Golding: The hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) has given me considerable help throughout my career. He has made a further contribution today. It is true that I have not said what I mean by the word "report". But I must leave that for now, because I must refer to

"the tests carried out on the new substance".

The new substance relates to the Bill. The Bill gives the Minister power to give water authorities the authority to add to the water two compounds—H_2SiF_6 and Na_2SiF_6.

It has always been my experience that many hon. Gentlemen deliver vicious attacks and ask the most penetrating questions, then declare that they have to go to dinner before hearing the answers. I have been told that the substances are not new. However, they would be new to the Bill. That is the fact that has been overlooked.

The amendment is designed to prevent the Secretary of State from adding a fluoride to the list of those that can be added to water unless tests had been undertaken and a report of the results submitted to Parliament three months beforehand.

Mr. Greg Knight: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest. However, I am a little concerned about the amendment. As I read it there may be power to carry out tests, but there is no requirement to do so. If the amendment were carried could not its effects be negated if no tests were carried out?

Mr. Golding: The answer is simple. Paragraph *(b)* will have to be deleted in another place. I hope that the noble Lords are listening to me now.

The Bill allows the two named substances to be added to water, but clause 2(1) also says:

"The Secretary of State may by order amend section 1(4) of this Act by—

(a) adding a reference to another compound of fluorine".

My amendment says that that fluorine would have to be tested and proved OK before its name could be added to the Act.

Let us consider the compounds of fluorine — the fluoroacetates, for example. My book says that

"The name is loosely applied to derivatives of monofluoroacetic acid, CH_2FCOOH. The acid itself, its methyl ester, and all derivatives broken down in the body to the acid, are highly toxic substances, behaving as convulsant poisons with a delayed action. They are almost odourless, are difficult to detect chemically, and are very stable."

The absurdity of the Bill is that it would allow the Secretary of State to add that substance — there is no argument about the fact that it is a poison—to water. That is why the Bill is defective. It is nonsense for Parliament to give the Government the power to add poisons to water without them being tested first.

Wherever we look in the Bill it is nonsense in terms of safety. We are not arguing about whether the fluorines mentioned are poisonous. Some hon. Members think that they are, others that they are not. However, we are dealing with compounds of fluorine that we all believe to be very dangerous.

3.15 pm

In reply to the hon. Member for Hendon, North I say that that is the sort of report that I would present to Parliament. It is full of chemical formulae, impressive diagrams and big words, but with the words "dangerous", "poisonous", "lethal" underlined to enable simple-minded Ministers to understand that we would not want to put those substances into the Bill and, more importantly, we would not want to put those substances into water. We want a report with a solid technical background which my hon. Friends can study and explain to me. We also want the simple, brutal, down-to-earth approach that might ultimately get through the thick skulls of those now sitting on the Treasury Bench.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is it not more important that the hon. Gentleman's amendments signify the need for close scrutiny by Parliament of such matters? Is it not a fact that, as a result of the intense discussions which have taken place over the last 16 hours or so, this is the first time that Parliament has applied itself in detail to the vexed question of fluoridation? Is it not therefore important that such amendments are carried?

Mr. Golding: The reason for that is simple. This is the first time since 26 February 1985 that I have been called to speak. Conservative Members have been talking on all subjects other than fluoridation in the absence of the hon. Gentleman.

I shall turn to fluoride compounds——

Mr. Gorst: Surely the hon. Gentleman could tell us the frequency with which he intends that they should be produced?

Mr. Golding *rose*——

Hon. Members: "Answer".

Mr. Golding: It does not work like that.

I must not miss telling the House about the fluorophosphoric acids. They are formed by the controlled hydrolysis of POF_3 and PF_5.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: PF_6.

Mr. Golding: PF_5. A moment ago I thought it would be a good thing to have a technical wizard at my side, but now I am being battered and bruised by my hon. Friend's barracking. He believes that I cannot read, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) but, as I said, it is POF_3 and PF_5. The report says that that acid and also the esters of H_2PO_3F, the fluorophosphonates, may be prepared by the action of the silver salt on an ester.

The report says exactly what we are saying—that those substances are extremely poisonous and volatile and act by inhibiting the enzyme cholinesterase. *[Interruption.]* Afterwards my English adviser will assist me.

The report says:

"They have an immediate action on the brain and lungs and cause a typical constriction of the pupil of the eye"—

rather as do the speeches that we heard through the night. The document says:

"Derivatives have been used as insecticides and suggested as chemical warfare agents (the 'nerve gasses')."

like the speeches that we heard through the night. The document says that derivatives have been used as insecticides and also as chemical warfare agents—nerve gasses. Those are the substances that the Secretary of State may by order add to the Bill—and to the water.

Mr. Fisher: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Golding: I am glad that the doctor has returned from his big meal. I wonder whether he can answer my question. If these substances are put in water at 1mg per litre, will they be safe? Perhaps I was ill advised to ask the doctor whether those poisons were safe. I shall ask him again. If the Minister adds those poisons at 1mg per litre, will they be safe?

Dr. M. S. Miller: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I thought that he was joking and asking a rhetorical question. The answer depends on what my hon. Friend means by "safe". If he wonders whether anyone can guarantee that no side-effects will develop if fluoride, in one part per million, is added to water, it can be guaranteed. I cannot guarantee that if I gave an hon. Gentleman an injection of penicillin that that would not cause problems, too.

If I recommended two or even one aspirin tablets, I could not guarantee that it would not cause the slightest ill effect.

All the evidence shows that no ill-effects or any consequences will arise from using fluoride at one part per million. [AN HON. MEMBER: "What about thalidomide?"] The trouble with thalidomide is that it was not tested enough. We are talking about substances that have been used for 40 years and no cases of illness have developed from the use of such substances. There are always pseudo specialists and experts who make a lot of money by taking an opposite view. They must have won the Nobel prize for playing Ludo.

I would not object to taking fluoride in one part per million or two, three, four or five parts per million. I would only start worrying if it reached 50 or 60 parts per million.

Mr. Golding: I hope that I can intervene in my hon. Friend's speech. We are not talking about what he thinks that we are talking about. No wonder we get trouble when we visit our doctors. I was talking about methyl ester which is a fluoride compound.

Mr. Best *rose*——

Mr. Golding: Hang on. I was saying that it is described as being a highly toxic convulsive poison with a delayed action. The trouble is that my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), who is a good doctor and a first-rate general practitioner, looks at the Bill, sees two fluorides which are less toxic than others—H_2SiF_6 and Na_2SiF_6—and thinks that that is what the Bill is about. It is not. It is about Ministers being able to add even more poisonous fluorides. My hon. Friend poured derision on my amendment earlier before he went for his big dinner and pudding.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I did not have a big dinner and I had no pudding. I had a very light lunch.

Mr. Golding: He was away a long time having a light lunch.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman who has just sought to intervene referred to experts. Is he aware that the definition of an expert is "ex"—past it—and "spurt"—to drip under pressure?

Mr. Golding: I do not mix in such vulgar company and make such remarks.

It is typical of the medical profession. The hon. Gentleman is sitting not with an Act but with some amendments in his hand. He does not understand what is happening.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. Gentleman has made a Freudian slip. It will become an Act.

Mr. Golding: The Bill will not become an Act if it goes to the other place in this condition.

Clause 2(1) states:

"The Secretary of State may by order amend section 1(4) of this Act by—

(a) adding a reference to another compound of fluorine; or

(b) removing any reference to a compound of fluorine."

I am in danger of repeating myself to the hon. Gentleman.

Somebody has passed me a note saying that the longer I speak the smaller our vote will be. That is the most compelling note that could ever be given to me.

I end on this point. When I was a Whip for the Independent Broadcasting Authority Bill, I remember one hon. Member being in revolt against the Government Whips. I do not name him, but I look straight at him now. I was in the Committee Corridor anxious and desperate for one hon. Member to arrive—Phillip Whitehead. We were one hon. Member short. Phillip arrived, dashing out of the lift with 12 books piled high in his hands. He said, "John, I've got some marvellous arguments here". My argument at the end of my speech, following the note from the hon. Member for Northampton, North, is the same as I used on that earlier occasion—"Phillip, bother the arguments; let's win the vote." So, having been appealed to on the ground of winning the vote, I end my contribution and commend my amendment to the House.

Mr. John Patten: Pursuant to my policy of first winning the argument before attempting to win the vote, I should like to follow what the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) has said.

I think that underlying everything that the hon. Gentleman has said is the concern for safety, which has been felt during the whole of this Tuesday's discussion of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman has shown concern about getting the correct reporting procedures back to Parliament, securing enough time for Parliament to consider the Bill and changing the procedure from the negative to the affirmative method of consideration. That was after he had taken us through his intellectual journeyings as he worked out exactly what the amendment, which he had drafted, meant.

If I understand correctly what the hon. Gentleman believes the effect of his amendment to be, a full report would have to be presented to Parliament on tests carried out on any substance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chose to add to the list of substances in the Bill as drafted and amended by the Committee.

3.30 pm

It would be three months—the hon. Gentleman told us why he picked three months—before the statutory instrument was laid before Parliament through the affirmative resolution procedure. He has done that on the

[Mr. John Patten]

basis of his experience. When he was a Minister the hon. Gentleman thought that the negative resolution procedure was a way of drawing wool over the eyes of the House on important issues.

If I have understood the intent of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme and the effect of his amendment —I believe that he is nodding assent from a sedentary position——

Mr. Golding: This is always the problem. *Hansard* is desperate to get my inaccuracies right and I am nodding at the shorthand writer's note rather than at the Minister.

Mr. Patten: I find myself in difficulty, Mr. Speaker. I shall have to speak to what I think the hon. Gentleman thinks he was thinking rather than anything that he can confirm he was thinking when he drafted amendment No. 46, which is so interesting. I hope that I shall be able to persuade the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to withdraw the amendment. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, who I welcome back to the Chamber, shares that wish.

I am happy to put on the record the fact that this is Tuesday, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health is under some difficulty, because this morning he attended Standing Committee D upstairs and is under the impression that it is Wednesday. He has had to come back from Wednesday to Tuesday to join our proceedings.

I hope that I can persuade the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to withdraw his amendment. It is not necessary to change the statutory instrument procedure used in the Bill. I give this undertaking to the House with all the force that I can muster in the seventeenth hour of the debate: we would not seek to amend the list by the addition of any chemical that could possibly give rise to safety problems. All chemicals used to treat water supplies —not just fluoride but between 50 and 100 substances —are vetted by a committee of the Department of the Environment. The House may not be aware that such a committee exists. Its title is the committee on chemicals and materials of construction for use in public water supplies and swimming pools. It does excellent work in vetting all chemicals and mineral substances that are added to water.

If, for any reason, hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme think that the Government have not considered adequately the safety of a new chemical, they can ask that the advice made available to the Department of the Environment, and through that Department to the Department of Health and Social Security, on any new chemical be made available to any hon. Member who asks for it. I undertake to make that evidence available to any hon. Member. If, even after that, any hon. Member still thinks that he has not been given adequate time to consider the statutory instrument, he can seek to reject it.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman may not recognise the predicament of hon. Members if they seek to reject the instrument in those circumstances. They may table a prayer as an attempt to do so, but they cannot force the Government to allow them time for a prayer to be taken on the Floor of the House, or even to allow debate in a Committee.

Will the Minister accept amendment No. 10 instea which is grouped with this, to ensure that there is bou to be a one and a half hour debate when the circumstanc arise?

Mr. Patten: I shall move on to amendment No. later, so perhaps the hon. Member for Berwick-upo Tweed (Mr. Beith) could wait till then.

It would be odd for a Secretary of State for Soc Services and a Minister for Health to seek to add to wa supplies any substance that they thought could damage t population. It is extraordinary to suggest that my right ho Friend or my right hon. and learned Friend should seek do that.

With our proven safety record stretching back some years it would be an abuse of parliamentary time to requ changes to the compounds of fluorine listed in clause 1(to be subject to the affirmative resolution of the Hous

Amendment No. 10, in the name of my hon. Friend t Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), has just been subj to some pre-emptive discussion by the hon. Member Berwick-upon-Tweed. The amendment would require order under clause 2(1) to vary the compounds of fluori to be used in fluoridation schemes to be subject to t affirmative resolution of the House. The hon. Member Newcastle-under-Lyme did not state clearly whether agreed with my description of his amendment. Howev I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that understanding of his amendment is correct.

Mr. Best: I hope that my hon. Friend will explain w the Government cannot accept it. It seems eminen sensible that the House should be the place to make final decision on the addition of any extra compound to water supply.

Mr. Patten: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern th amendments to the authorised compounds should not made lightly. I do not want to introduce otiose words, I reiterate that it would be a very odd Secretary of St for Social Services and Minister for Health who wou seek to add anything to the water supplies that they thoug would do any damage.

I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern that tho decisions should not be made lightly. However, powers provided under clause 2(1) will be exercised o on the basis of expert advice from the Department of Environment committee on chemicals and materials construction for use in public water supplies a swimming pools. This advice could be made available any hon. Member who wished to study it. It would alwa be possible to seek to annul the statutory instrument. Th is no need for safeguards beyond those already provid in the Bill.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the ho Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: I shall give way in a moment. My ri hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services co have sought to take powers to himself from time to ti to add or take away from the water supply such substan connected with fluoridisation as he chose, without comi back to the House. Instead, we have taken the detailed a sensible step of setting out on the face of the Bill substances that can be added, and giving adequ safeguards under clause 2(1).

Mr. Williams: The hon. Gentleman still seems not to have understood the deep concern that is felt. Now we are compounding the fault of which the House first complained. As a result of the legislation we shall hand over to one non-elected body the ability to advise another non-elected body that it will carry out certain functions with no recourse to democratic procedures. We are now told that the power to vary what is added to the water will depend on the advice of yet a third non-elected body, of which the hon. Gentleman rightly guessed the House was unaware. Does the hon. Gentleman also realise that the negative resolution has little chance of being debated in the House? He should study the figures and find out what small proportion of such resolutions come before the House.

As for the good intentions of Ministers, we do not know whether they are good intentions. Equally good-intentioned Ministers stood soldiers in the desert and allowed them to be exposed to radiation.

Mr. Patten: During the debates on Second Reading, in Committee and during the many interesting hours of debate on the Floor of the House on Report we have discussed the Government's attitude towards water and health authorities. In the 17th hour of the debate it would not be right for me to go over that ground again.

Mr. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Patten: Before the right hon. Gentleman tries to intervene again, I am trying to answer his first question.

We have built adequate safeguards into the Bill. We have listed those substances that can be added. Clause 2(1) contains sufficient safeguards.—*[Interruption.]* That is a matter of difference between my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn and me, and between the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and me. We simply disagree. There is endless opportunity in the House to disagree about ways and means. The issue is not one that can be subjected to exact scientific analysis about what form it should take.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The Minister knows that I am a very strong supporter of fluoride being added to water. I understand why the Government wish to proceed in this way. There are adequate safeguards for the efficacy of what is added and for ensuring that it is not dangerous.

It was pointed out to the Committee on Safety of Medicines that some drugs slip through. Unfortunately that happens, possibly because not enough experimentation has been done. However, we are talking about well-known chemical substances. There is nothing new about them. They have been used for adding to water and for other purposes for many years. It is unlikely that they will cause any difficulty but there is always the remote possibility of some problem.

I should be satisfied if the Minister would undertake that, whatever Minister was in office, he would not wait for a tragedy if there were any sign of difficulty with a substance, but instead institute an immediate examination.

Mr. Patten: Of course the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We have debated ways and means of getting an adequate parliamentary check on what will happen in the future and whether it should continue—both hypothetical questions. I do not wish to go over our previous debates. I merely remind the House that we discussed the way in which, if they chose, health authorities could re-examine the question of fluoridation at will. By a number of devices the House can do the same thing.

Underlying our debates is the fact that the Secretary of State and his Ministers would not, under any Administration, seek to add to the public water supply or to any other part of the earth or the atmosphere any substance that was likely to cause harm. Moreover, if any substance was found to be likely to cause harm, Ministers would not wait for debates in the House. We do not do so when there are contra-indications about drugs. My right hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend act swiftly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, if necessary using his powers of direction under the National Health Service Act 1977 introduced by the then Labour Government, can tell water authorities and health authorities to cease the practice and take away this or that chemical.

3.45 pm

The same argument applies to the other amendment in this group. However, before I come to that amendment, I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who wishes to intervene.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Will my hon. Friend explain further why the Government should take powers to close the stable door after the horse has bolted? I fully agree with the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) who said how unsatisfactory it was to hand over these powers to unaccountable bodies. It is even more extraordinary, bearing in mind the patent uncertainty of this issue—to say the very least—and the wealth of evidence cited by hon. Members at great length and with great sincerity during these long debates, showing that there are large question marks about the safety of fluoride, for the Government not just to empower themselves to medicate compulsorily the water supply, but to hand over that power to other bodies.

Mr. Patten: We are not handing over that power to any other body. All the advice that is available to the Department of the Environment is scientific advice. Scientific advice is available to my right hon. Friend. It is no good my hon. Friend shaking his head. I am explaining the situation. Scientific advice is available to my right hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend, and on the basis of that scientific advice about drugs, mineral additives to water, and every other aspect of the National Health Service, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services acts swiftly, often well before problems occur, when warning signs are flagged about any of those issues.

Over the past 30 years, successive Governments of both parties have conducted their policy on fluoridation on that basis. We are not talking about a new drug introduced a couple of years ago by a foreign drug company with a curious name that we do not understand. We are talking about a substance that has a successful and proven track record over a substantial number of years—a period substantially longer than that of many of the drugs on the market that have been tried and tested. That is what gives us the certainty that the method laid down in the Bill is correct.

We therefore cannot accept the amendments, or the similar and related amendment standing in the name of my

[Mr. Patten]

hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). If the amendments are not withdrawn, we shall seek to resist them.

Mr. Forth: I rise with some hesitation at this hour, bearing in mind the length of time for which our deliberations have lasted. My excuse for seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, is that I was in Standing Committee all last night, so I was able to participate only sporadically in the proceedings on the Floor of the House. However, since 8 o'clock this morning I have followed our proceedings here with great interest.

I was particularly interested in what the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) said, because he raised many fundamental points which I must say were not dealt with by the Minister entirely to my satisfaction. The amendment raises a number of different and important issues. It involves procedural, political and — in some senses — even constitutional issues. I shall deal with each of them in turn—I hope briefly.

Against the background of the emotions aroused by the Bill, of the length of time that the House has been prepared to spend on it, and of the highly contentious elements of the argument, it seems odd to me that the Minister should come to the House at this hour and say, "You really must accept the sort of approach that we are taking." My answer would be, "He would say that, wouldn't he?"

I regret having to say that because in any normal circumstances, I believe that we could accept the procedures suggested in the original drafting of the Bill. But when the Minister comes to the House and says, "It would be a very odd Secretary of State, or Minister of State, who would seek to add harmful substances to water", he begs two very important questions. First, while all Government Members — and I hope Opposition Members too—have total respect, admiration and regard for the present incumbents of the great offices that I have just mentioned, it is legitimate to query, now as always, whether any House of Commons should be expected to accept that sort of statement for any future incumbents of those offices.

The Minister is prevailing on our good will and our good faith by suggesting that we can make the transition from accepting his word and that of his right hon. and learned Friend, and with those, the words of any future incumbents of their offices.

Mr. Williams: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that in support of his argument we do not need to deal with hypothetical cases? We have only to look at the long time taken to establish the hazards relating to asbestos and to have recognised the problems, other than pneumoconiosis, relating to dust in mines, a struggle that lasted for decades. Will the hon. Gentleman equally bear in mind that where there has been universal compulsory consumption of a substance, possible compensation payments might be so enormous that they would produce serious conflicting pressures on the Minister?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Along with the point that he so correctly made there goes another argument. I admit that there is always an element of arrogance in the House when it takes the argument to itself, but I shall suggest it nevertheless. We are entitled to be suspicious from time to time of scientific, bureaucratic and even of ministerial opinion, f reasons that the right hon. Gentleman has just given. have been other cases.

Mr. John Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Frie Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). I unde that my hon. Friend is keen to replace the ne statutory instrument procedure with the affirmative

Mr. Forth: Wait and see?

Mr. Patten: In that case, may I withdraw my qu and wait and see?

Mr. Forth: Even the Minister must not presur much on what I am about to say. I invite him to foll down my chosen path, and then if he wishes to inte I shall of course allow him to do so.

There is a time-honoured, but legitimate, questio we must address, the key and vital relationship tha always exist in such matters between the Hou Commons, with its accumulated wisdom, and, to de it in shorthand, the Administration, with all, tha includes — the Executive branch of Govern Ministers, civil servants, scientific experts, and the body of advice and guidance available withi Government machine.

It has been suggested that the House must always that no future incumbent of one of the high offices appropriate Department could give us wrong advice question. But that is something that I cannot accept, as a constitutional principle or as a principle relationship between Government and the Hou Commons.

My hon. Friend went on to ask who would seek harmful substances to water. That question, aga begged. The debate throughout all these hours perhaps more yet to come, has been about our judg of what is harmful in water. It is a matter of regret this stage in the debate the Minister should come to say, "Surely I, or my colleagues, would not be so as to add something harmful to water?" when he has all this time trying to tell us that fluoride is not ha Also, there is a large body of opinion in the House judges that fluoride is, or may be, harmful and those Members would not be prepared to take the risks th Minister seems to be telling us he would be prepa take.

It is a matter of judgment of risk, but judgment in the context of the health and well-being o population.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I wonder whethe Minister, the House and the public notice that the doctor, the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. M whom I greatly admire and who is in favour of the none the less said that, having seen the evidence a fluoride, he could not guarantee that it was safe. W my hon. Friend like to comment on that?

Mr. Forth: Indeed, I am grateful to my hon. F that is one of the other sides of this many-sided co there is such a thing. It concerns that element of judg about which we in turn are now making our own judg and it is whether we can reasonably be asked to accep the procedures laid down in the original drafting of th will be satisfactory in this case.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. Gentleman paraphrased what I said; it was a selective quotation

my remarks. I draw a comparison with the honest statement that no medicine that anyone gives to a patient can be guaranteed to produce no untoward effect. I did not say "unsafe".

I should like to bring the hon. Gentleman's attention to the new drugs which come on to the market every year. There are many such drugs. Some are good, others not so good. When an hon. Member is prescribed a particular medicine by a doctor he does not ask whether the substance was considered by the House to see whether it was safe. Life could not go on like that. The cumbersome bureaucracy that would be needed if that were to happen would mean that no one would receive injections for pneumonia or modern drugs for heart treatment and high blood pressure and so on.

Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that many of the drugs I am talking about cause side effects. Many are extremely dangerous. Fluoride is not, on the evidence we have—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not make a speech. He may do so later, but he is intervening now.

Dr. Miller: I take the point, Mr. Speaker. All I am saying is that that cumbersome bureaucratic system cannot be applied to a substance which is less toxic than many of the substances which we accept readily when we are ill.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful, but I shall not be tempted down that path which would lead back to a rediscussion of the principles behind the Bill. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, would not want that. Suffice it to say at this stage that the difference here is that we are talking about the compulsory force-feeding of people with this material. They have a choice ultimately whether they are given medication by a doctor. Had I participated in the Second Reading debate my argument would have been that if people want to protect their teeth they can brush them. That is a simplistic but nevertheless effective approach to the problem. I accept the hon. Member's explanation and I respect his professional expert knowledge of the matter. However in this case, perhaps uniquely, we are being asked to accept the concept of introducing into the water supply something that many people may not want to ingest. That is the key distinction. That is what makes the issue so vital and important.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My hon. Friend has just made a key point. I am quite sure that he would agree with me that not even the Government's most extravagant political opponents would accuse them of wishing to poison the people. However, the Bill is gratuitous. It is risky and large scale in effect. Would it not be the merest intellectual and medical prudence to pause and not to take these powers until the uncertainties over fluoride are resolved?

4 pm

Mr. Forth: Typically, my hon. Friend has almost made my speech for me, but with a brevity and relevance that I find difficult to match. If he will allow me, however, I shall put what he said into my own words.

I now approach a question that the Minister is eagerly anticipating. I shall put it to him in the best way that I can.

Mr. Marlow: May I just say something to the honourable doctor sitting opposite—the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller)? When we are ill, we sometimes have to take a drug which may have a side effect. But when we are well we do not need to take the drug, so why must we put up with the side effects?

Mr. Forth: Again, one of my hon. Friends is in danger of stealing my thunder. On occasions such as this we risk out best lines being usurped by our hon. Friends, but because they are our hon. Friends we do not mind.

We are now temptingly approaching a matter that the Minister wanted me to deal with some time ago. I have tried to explain the background to this important issue. We now come to the key matter of procedure, which actually implies much more. We appear simply to be discussing negative and positive approaches, and many hon. Members will be forgiven if they fail to understand all the nuances, although we all tried to follow the brief but excellent speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Do we wish to submit ourselves yet again to what many of us have often seen as a defective or at least very weak procedure for the House to scrutinise what the Executive brings before it? Rightly or wrongly, that is how many right hon. and hon. Members see the negative procedure, which lays a heavy burden on individual Members and on the House to attempt to get the gist of a measure, to judge it and even perhaps to stop its progress.

If, on the other hand, we adopt one of the procedures suggested in the amendments, I believe that we shall have a much greater opportunity to properly scrutinise—if I may split my infinitive—this vital matter in which so many people have shown an interest. Although we were guided carefully through the amendment by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, I feel that it is incumbent on us to look at it again and judge for ourselves whether the approach that it suggests is better than that suggested by the Minister.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend complained that he had split an infinitive by saying "to properly scrutinise". I cannot understand why on earth he did not say "to scrutinise properly". Then he would not have had to explain.

Mr. Forth: I am always ready to be corrected by my hon. and learned Friend, whose knowledge and experience of such matters far exceeds mine. I am grateful to him for pointing out my grammatical offence, and I shall try not to commit it again, at least during this speech.

Amendment No. 46 contains all the essential elements of the argument that we are considering. It offers us all of the ingredients that we would wish to have before us to carry out the procedure of scrutiny: a full report, a three-month period in which to consider it and tests on the new substance. Surely that is the culmination of all our debates about the introduction of fluoride to water supplies. I cannot understand the Minister's reluctance to accept something that must appeal to many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. Perhaps I can tempt my hon. Friend the Minister to say, now or later, why he is so unhappy and suspicious about a procedure which apparently gives us what we want and apparently allows us to judge, as our experience develops and unfolds, the efficacy and, more importantly, the safety of the substance that gives so many of us cause for concern.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Put succinctly, the Minister will reply that what he dislikes about my hon. Friend's suggestion is that it is democratic.

Mr. Forth: Democracy has many facets and may meanings, probably as many as there are individuals who

[Mr. Forth]

try to interpret it. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his advice, but I choose to see it in a slightly different context, which is the facility for the House to judge from time to time the cumulative experience of the issue through the vehicle of the reports which the amendment suggests. That is why, again, I am unhappy about the Minister asking us to accept the kind of procedures which we have used in the past, and still use, and that are in the Bill, drafted as ever in the way in which such Bills have always been drafted. I hope that he will accept our understandable suspicion of the past weaknesses of such procedures that lead many of us to prefer the formulation that the amendment suggests.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend was right. The "wait and see" policy was the right one for me to follow, because it reassured me that my powers of intuition about the way in which my hon. Friend was likely to go in his speech were not wide of the mark. May I say in the margins of my intervention how much I admire the way in which my hon. Friend is continuing his speech in the 18th hour of the debate? It shows that our collective decision to pursue the debate when it reached an important and interesting stage was correct.

Is my hon. Friend not aware, as he discusses the correct procedures that we should use, that one of the problems with using the affirmative resolution procedure is that it has to be laid before the House, and a period of time elapse, and has to be debated before decisions can be taken. Is he also not aware that under the negative resolution procedure if there is doubt about the efficacy or safety of a chemical, it can be removed immediately, without delay, from the list prescribed in the Bill, which we hope will be enacted, whereas delay is inbuilt in the affirmative procedure?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister. I acknowledge also my debt of gratitude to the Government—or what is sometimes in these circumstances vulgarly known as the payroll—for voting to extend the debate beyond 1.25 pm today as, due to that decision, I was allowed to make my speech. I am most grateful and I hope that they regard their decision as worthwhile.

To take up the point that the Minister made for me, I accept what he says and the spirit in which he says it. Like so many other matters, it depends upon one's perspective and assumptions, and where one starts out from—if I may end the sentence with a preposition for the benefit of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn).

We are attempting today to make a balanced judgment. I remain unconvinced about what the Minister said. I prefer the formulation suggested by the amendment, because I believe even now that on this matter of such vital concern to so many, reassurances are wanted across the spectrum of society that is represented here today. I am prepared to keep an open mind, but I still feel that the approach which the amendment suggests would be preferred by many who, rightly or wrongly, still have an inherent suspicion of the Executive's approach, power and decision.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have a true belief that the Minister, for all his charm and bonhomie, shares the same fears as my hon. Friend has advanced, and for all his pretence, while grabbing the Dispatch Box and flicking his s of being a man of confidence, he is a man of doub hon. Friend is expressing his doubts.

Mr. Forth: I am most grateful to my hon. and le Friend. With some reluctance, I must draw my rema a close. I know that many of my hon. Friends l forward to my contribution and I regret havi disappoint them at such an early stage. Nevertheless, aware of the strictures of many people, not least you Mr. Speaker, so I will mention my final thought o issue.

I have not addressed myself to the conte amendment No. 78, which raises another new important concept of the involvement of both Ho That matter was touched on by the hon. Membe Newcastle-under-Lyme and I venture to suggest should leave it to other of my hon. Friends to develo point. My hon. Friend the Minister may care to think the extent to which he would accept involvement b other place in this matter, with their Lordships using most mature and expert judgment, which we have seen employed on so many matters, and bringing it t on this issue of vital social interest.

Therefore, we should be given the opportunity t on these amendments. I hope that they will n withdrawn but left before the House. Further, I hope in the same way as I am prepared, even now, to kee mind open to my hon. Friend the Minister, he w prepared to keep his mind open to the virtues o amendments which I have described.

Mr. Stanbrook: The Bill does not have the supp the majority of public opinion. By any standard th can accept, any testing of public opinion reveals th compulsory medication of public water supplies is re by an overwhelming majority of the people. Nor d have the support of hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All that the hon. Mem saying would be eminently suitable on Third Readi not, I think, on this amendment.

Mr. Stanbrook: That may well be so, Mr. Spe as regards my opening remarks. I will narrow them to the purpose of the amendment.

The question posed by the amendment was pose most acute form by my hon. Friend the Minister. saying that it is not necessary for us to pass the amen because he and his colleagues in the Department of H and Social Security not only have the interests o country at heart, but are supported and advised number of experts, with committees of doctors, che and scientists to assist them, and water authoritie district health authorities which can advise and decisions. However, in all of those respects, none of people is elected, save the Minister himself.

His argument that he can take the decision i interest of the country as a whole is the argument t tyrant down the ages. In this place, 650 Membe Parliament are elected to make judgments of the kin the amendment calls upon us and not the Minister to m I acknowledge that it may well be that the apathy majority of hon. Members will mean that they ar present to vote down my hon. Friend the Minister, b is supported by a number of other hon. Members because they are obliged to support the Government

be sufficient to overwhelm the opposition to the measure in this place. However, they are acting on the principle that they know best—but they do not. This place exists not because Ministers know best but because we control Ministers.

Judgments of this kind are essentially political. They are not scientific, expert or technical, but political. Do the majority of the public want compulsory medication of water supplies?

We should know best about that as there are 650 Members of Parliament. The amendments seek to ensure that the essential argument should be resolved in this place. All the supporting arguments are directed to the end that we are supreme under this constitution.

4.15 pm

The matter goes to the root of the liberty of the individual. Why should he be imposed upon in this way? Why should a political decision, based on non-elected technical argument, be imposed on people against their will? We are not satisfied that it should be imposed and believe that my hon. Friend the Minister is wrong to say, "Trust me because I sit at my desk in Whitehall aided and advised by technical experts on this subject and you can be assured that we shall take this decision only in the interests of the people."

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: If my hon. and learned Friend will allow me, it would be better if I finished my argument.

If government were conducted on that basis, we would not need Parliament. It might be that the country would be better governed, but for centuries we have decided that we should not be governed in that way. All experience has taught us that that sort of government does not lead to the improved condition of the people.

The amendment strikes at the fundamental principle that is covered by the Bill. Should the House have the decision over a political judgment or not? The amendment covers that point, and I ask the House to support it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 84, Noes 192.

Division No. 150] **[4.16 pm**

AYES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Blackburn, John
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Galley, Roy
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayward, Robert
Heffer, Eric S.
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Irving, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David John
McNamara, Kevin
Marlow, Antony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Proctor, K. Harvey
Randall, Stuart
Rost, Peter
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bill Walker and
Mr. Eric Forth.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fletcher, Alexander
Forrester, John
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lambie, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Loyden, Edward
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Major, John
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.

Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
O'Neill, Martin
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I trust that I do not have to break off on a point of order to suggest that the ten-minute rule might be applied to speeches at this stage of the proceedings. I cannot believe that hon. Members who have taken part in the debate during the last few hours can think of any new point to make, because I cannot. At this stage we wish merely to underline the productive nature of our debate and our basic approach to the Bill.

As a final word about the Bill, I wish to say that I am glad that for the last few hours and over several Sittings we have been discussing a Bill that directly relates to health. It is one of the features of the job of Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Security that we rarely directly address the problem of health, and certainly not through legislation. We usually find ourselves arguing about money, management and local difficulties of one kind or another. But this Bill is directly aimed at promoting good health; it is an extremely important measure for preventive health. It has been interesting, to say the least, to see the way in which the House of Commons has reacted to a measure whose sole purpose is to reduce the incidence of dental caries.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I think that my hon. Friend may catch Mr. Speaker's eye shortly.

I shall not repeat the scientific basis of our case. A great deal of time has been spent in exchanging the opinions of different medical and scientific authorities in this country and abroad. I remain satisfied that the Governm demonstrated that the introduction of fluoride water supply at the recommended concentrati marked effect in reducing dental caries, especial children. It is more successful than any other m far devised.

We are convinced that there is no serious do the safety of adding fluoride to water at the question. It would be pointless to continue goin the arguments about whether it is dangerous to bees, cattle and trout, and their eggs, or to wom the contraceptive pill or people with cardia trouble or suckling babies, and so on—or about it rots pipes and destroys the sewerage system. I the fact that there is an immense amount of scie medical opinion in support of our case. But t challenge that case will not consider any evide than their own, which they collect from can bodies around the world. I assure the House would be no question of our embarking on a mea felt that there was a serious doubt about whether putting the health of the nation at risk. These ma be examined in great depth.

It has been shown during the past 30 or 40 when fluoride has been put in the water happened in many places — only one death attributed to that, which was the result of an ac Annapolis. There was a failure of equipment, wh not occur here, and a man on a dialysis machine being used improperly was so discomfited by th that he suffered a heart attack. He is the on casualty of the fluoride policy throughout the w no one has produced a shred of serious sci medical evidence that stands up to examination that anyone else has suffered an adverse effe health.

In bringing forward the Bill, we had not in spend our time advocating the case for putting f water. Again, we certainly do not intend Government or Ministers or "The Payroll"— the villains of the piece are meant to be—will themselves the decision-making role about fluoride is to be used. Our intention is that t should be kept as a local decision. We seek to e water and health authorities, at least in England, power which they always thought that they had, for themselves whether to add fluoride to the wa will certainly be no campaigning from us in tha We believe that health authorities must come to conclusions after considering the evidence, decide whether to make application to th authorities.

We have made concessions during this debate. But I must confess that I might have be to make more concessions in the first quarter o or so of the debate if I had not known that at lea five hours lay ahead, even if I did that. Again Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of Health and Social Security made two concessions: first, that health authorities statutorily obliged to consult the House before decision on whether to apply to their water a secondly, that they must meet in public when t decision, unless the more excitable opponents

posed a threat to public order. We shall carry out both those commitments when the Bill is debated in the other place.

I shall not speak for too long on individual liberty because I respect the strong feelings, especially from my hon. Friends, on that question. Moreover, I realise that at times, it lay behind the fervour with which the anti-fluoride case was argued. I am sorry that I could never understand how an individual liberty issue could be raised in respect of the content of the public water supply. I still cannot envisage how a water supply could be laid on for each person. It must be a collective decision. Moreover, I believe that the collective judgment is that it should be decided on good health, scientific and safety grounds.

I was saddened by the fact that, after many hours, many of my hon. Friends and I were unable to persuade one another on the question of individual liberty. We saw it from different perspectives. However, not every hon. Member who is renowned for especial fervour for individual liberty was in the anti-fluoride camp. I remind my hon. Friends, who doubtless will enter the debate again, that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who are known in the House as ferocious defenders of individual liberty and do not hesitate to use parliamentary procedures when they think that individual liberties are threatened, were both in my position. Neither could see a remotely serious point affecting individual liberty raised by the Bill.

Therefore, I fear it must be agreed that there was no meeting of minds. We shall all battle together to defend civil liberties when we are all agreed that they are threatened. Meanwhile, I see the Bill as a harmless preventive health measure to tidy up what would otherwise be a legal difficulty that would give rise to unnecessary litigation.

Mr. Alan Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall conclude to give time to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and other hon. Members. I apologise for not giving way, for the first time in about 20 to 30 hours of debate.

We have won the Divisions. I do not accept that it is surprising for Ministers to turn up to vote for a Government Bill. That does not seem to be a constitutional outrage. I am especially cheered by the fact that as the hours went by, as daylight came, our numbers in the Lobby steadily increased. That might be due partly to the skill of my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who, even on a free vote, can persuade more and more of my hon. Friends to come to the House. My hon. Friend and I believe that we won the arguments. I hope that that judgment is shared when the Bill reaches the House of Lords.

Mr. Dobson: I do not know whether I shall do more damage to the Minister by saying that I agree with him, or whether he wil do more damage to me by saying that we are in agreement. Once more, I find it peculiar to be saying that I personally support the Bill. I hope that it will not put off too many Conservative Members to know that fluoridation of water was approved without a vote at the Labour party conference in 1978—the last time that the matter was debated by the Labour party.

I support the Bill for the following reasons. The case has been overwhelmingly made that the introduction of minute quantities of fluoride benefit children's teeth. Equally, I am unconvinced by the argument that the introduction of such quantities of fluoride endangers health in general. In those circumstances, the only question that must be asked is whether those minute amounts of fluoride should be administered to children's teeth by way of toothbrushes and tablets or whether it should come via the public water supply.

I support fluoride being carried by the public water supply because I am convinced that that is the only way in which the majority of working class children and the worst off children in our society will have the advantage of getting fluoride protection. Many children have parents who cannot afford special toothpaste and tablets. Many of those children come from homes where it is extremely difficult, for a variety of reasons, to establish a regime in which they are encouraged to clean their teeth regularly. In those circumstances, if there are benefits to be gained from the introduction of fluoride, fluoridation of water seems the best way to benefit the teeth of the worst off children.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): Why is it that in every other instance — smoking, alcoholism, and so on — the emphasis is placed on health education, whereas with water supplies, for the first time in history, or at least, in living memory, compulsory medication will replace health education and persuasion?

Mr. Dobson: Fluoridation is not the only example, even in British history. Certain vaccinations were once compulsory. That was to benefit not only the children who were vaccinated but everyone else. It was felt that no parent was entitled to have a sick child who might infect other children. That element of compulsion was necessary at the time to break the backs of some awful diseases.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how it is possible for a child with tooth decay to pass it on to a child in another street or town?

Mr. Dobson: That is not what I said. As the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) notoriously misunderstands everything with which he does not agree, I shall not bother to reply to that non-question.

I was replying to the reasonable question of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) about compulsion. There has to be an element of compulsion in any action affecting the public water supply, because, unless one has a private water supply and can thus opt out, one has to drink the water that everyone else drinks.

The Minister may be familiar with Nottingham, as his constituency is close to that city. The argument that has been advanced throughout the debate that fluoridation is a gross interference with individual liberty was employed by a 19th century exponent of Victorian values, a lord mayor of Nottingham, who said that to have a clean water supply at all was an interference with individual liberty. He maintained that people should be entitled to buy dirty water from those who had traditionally sold it. Such arguments are still being used.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned the queen of the midlands. When Nottingham was its own water authority—in the happy days before this House cocked up local government — the Nottingham city council, and the water authority, as it was then, voted not

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

to have fluoride in the water. The Severn-Trent water authority has continued to honour that democratic decision made 10 or 12 years ago. Last week, as a result of debates in the House, the city council again discussed the issue and agreed that it still did not want fluoride. I am here to represent that view in the Lobby of the House tonight.

Mr. Dobson: That is the council's privilege. I think that it is wrong, but that is how the system works. As one who tries in other spheres to defend locally elected authorities in London and other parts of the country from rate-capping and all sorts of other obnoxious legislation which most Conservative Members happily troop into the Lobby to support, I stand by the right of the people of Nottingham to decide what should happen in Nottingham.

I am grateful to the Minister for agreeing to accept at least the principles of the amendment that would require a health authority considering fluoridation to hold at least that part of its meeting in public. That is a limited step forward. I see no objection in principle to putting fluoride in the water so long as people know about it. However, I object to the idea of anything being introduced into the water supply without people knowing about it. I look forward to the Government moving an amendment in the House of Lords to achieve that objective.

The Committee stage of the Bill was somewhat shorter than Report, to the best of my recollection. For the benefit of hon. Members who did not have the privilege of serving on the Committee, I should explain that I and some of my hon. Friends tabled an amendment that would have obliged water authorities to discuss fluoridation in the open part of their meetings. The problem is that there are no open parts of water authority meetings. There used to be, before the present Government, with the support of many Conservative Members, changed them from open public bodies virtually to secret societies.

I see that the hon. Members for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) and for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), together with the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who intervened in my speech earlier, all happily voted on 16 November 1982 to make secret everything that water authorities did. I find it odd that they are now demanding public decisions and——

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not vote on such a matter. It has nothing to do with Scotland, because we do not have matters secret in Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman can produce the evidence, he should, but typically he cannot.

Mr. Dobson: It so happens that the only piece of evidence I have is the Division List on the Water Bill of 16 November 1982. Unless someone else was posing as "Fairbairn, Nicholas"—an extremely unlikely poser—I believe tht the hon. and learned Gentleman voted for that Bill and it did have the effects about which I am talking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that we have cleared up that matter and can now return to Third Reading of the Water (Fluoridation) Bill on 6 March.

Mr. Dobson: The point I was making was that a large number of hon. Members are opposed to this measure.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, I Speaker. Should you have said 6 March? Is March?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I stand apologise to the House. It is 5 March in here

Mr. Dobson: Earlier, when you, Mr. Dep had the benefit of not being in the Chamber, that one hon. Gentleman did not know which Unlike that hon. Gentleman, we usually thi know which day it is and we understand you

A vast amount of effort has been put i Conservative Members, and the odd Conse hon. Member, to object to water authoritie democratically elected bodies, and they vote that they were not.

In the past, objections have been raised bec health authorities are not democratically ele but I have seen no movement on the Conservat to turn them into democratically elected bodie say on that point is that if Conservative M getting bothered about the undemocratic nat authorities and of health authorities, that view a substantial number of Opposition Membe share the doubts about them not being dem only when they talk and decide about fluorid they talk about hospital closures and other asp activity. That is an indication of a gene concern.

Finally, as a supporter of adding fluoride support the Bill. I trust that it will get a Third get through the House of Lords. As I said Reading, I believe that to vote for the Bill is to children getting toothache. Anyone not votin have to explain to parents and children all over why they voted for toothache.

4.48 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: My right hon. Friend the Minister cannot really be as happy a sounded because he knows that this is a nas which goes to the very heart of the philosophy I thought he and I were elected. I have alw opponent of the compulsory element of fluor while at the Department on many occasions I back drafts from civil servants who tried to words into my mouth, with the support of my the Member for Reading, East (Sir. G. Vaugh the Minister. I do not believe that the positi when my right hon. and learned Friend to fluoridation because I still had that respo made it clear that it was not our policy compulsory fluoridation in any way. I also there is still a scintilla of doubt about the safety

Perhaps the only thing that might have d vote for the Bill were the antics of a certain Blount who seemed to spend most of his time he was the oracle to which all of us should k is one of the most discourteous selective whom anyone in the House has had the misfor to correspond. Nonetheless, the persuasive att hon. and learned Friend the Member for Lawrence) have rescued me from that partic view.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am grateful to my for giving way. He referred to the time whe

with my right hon. Friend and me in the Department. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, at the time, we were all agreed that the present state of affairs should remain. He will appreciate that it was only as a result of Scottish litigation that the Government were bound to take a decision about whether all fluoride should be taken out of water or whether we had to restore the previous status quo and return to local authorities the power to take a decision. I seek to persuade the hon. Gentleman that all we are doing now is reinstating the position that he and I, with our different views on the main issue, were happy to live with as colleagues in the Department.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I appreciate that, but the Jauncey case gave us the opportunity as a Parliament to consider whether we should fill the gap that Jauncey had produced or to give Parliament, in the light of its experience, the opportunity to say that it would do away with all compulsory fluoridation.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not wish to seem contradictory, but my hon. Friend is talking about the McColl case. Jauncey was the judge. However, it may be called the Jauncey case. When did the last English Parliament ever say that a judgment in the Court of Session, which had nothing to do with the law of England, should be the basis for legislation?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am not an expert on Scottish law. I bow in more ways than one to my hon. and learned Friend from north of the border. If I do not follow that line, I might yet again be invited to Fordell castle for a pleasant visit. If I go too far down that route, I might find the gates barred to me.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister was perfectly right to say that he and I and his right hon. Friend had no quarrel on this matter. However, the opportunity arose for us to decide whether we could go the whole way. The Bill does not do that. It merely puts a spot of amalgam into a gap that a judge has exposed.

I speak with some feeling as early this morning I had to submit to the ministrations of a distinguished dentist. In between having my mouth opened, I was asked what I was doing on fluoride. I thought that I might be at risk if I gave my views, so I said, "It is a difficult point". Fortunately, I survived and came back here.

My right hon. and learned Friend said firmly that he knows of only one death that has occurred as a result of fluoridating water. He was referring to the Annapolis case. My right hon. and learned Friend has made the case for those of us who are against the Bill. I fully accept that it is important for the sake of children's teeth that they get fluoride. The way to do that is to give it in tablet form or through fluoridated skimmed milk which the Borrow Foundation is offering. We do not need to submit the rest of the population to compulsory medication about which there is a scintilla of doubt.

The balance, of course, is not in doubt, but I am quite certain that, in his expert capacity as a leading lawyer, my right hon. Friend could make a very good case from a doubt that could be conjured up about the efficacy and safety of fluoride. Therefore, the man need not have died, because nothing that could have been done to the water supply in Annapolis could have helped anyone over the age of 18. That is where I part company with my right hon. Friend.

I want my speech to be brief because there is no purpo in going over the subject. There has been a very cl statement that the Government would get the Bill pass which I understand. All Governments when they put th names to a Bill have to get it passed. There was a free v for the rest of us, which again is acceptable. It significant that without the members of the Governme be they paid or unpaid, on quite a few Divisions th would not have been a Government majority for the B although—I must be careful—there might have been one or two Divisions where they would.

In my view, the Bill breaches the principle of individ liberty but at the same time—I say this to the h Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)— has the power to help children, who are the only peo who will benefit from the Bill. None of us here will ben from it, but every one of us, from Mr. Speal downwards, could be harmed if something went wr with the fluoridated water supply.

It is all very well to say that there are differ mechanisms for the supply at Annapolis where a hu amount of fluoride went out, but no one can say with hand on his heart that it could not happen again. Hum error can cause accidents. We have heard it about nuclear power stations. Therefore, somebody might suf who need not if the giving of fluoride is not confined people in the age category where it is of use.

I hope that for the reasons which I have given— compulsion in particular—the House will not give Bill a Third Reading. But, equally, I believe that when other place has the opportunity to make amendments may not find it easy to accept a Government Bill o subject which to my knowledge was not in the manifes

When the Bill comes back here amended, I am sure t there will be many opportunities, with Lords amendme and amendments to Lords amendments, to restate arguments about compulsion. That opens up an interest prospect.

I hope that it will not be thought necessary to bring the Patronage Secretary. The Government have a enough majority without the Patronage Secretary sitt here. It may have been his presence which made one two of us not prolong some of the debates.

I think that the Bill is a mistake. It is not in line w the main Conservative philosophy, and the unstin support given to the Bill by the speaker on the Opposit Front Bench has convinced me more than ever of my vie

4.59 pm

Dr. M. S. Miller: It is amazing how in this Hous subject on which it seems there should be a joint effor produce wanted effects in respect of health can prod acrimonious although sometimes humorous episodes debate, and certainly a very heated and controver attitude.

I approach the matter from a simple point of view. I not consider, as some hon. Gentlemen do, that de caries is a trivial disease. It is a very serious disease children's teeth and infections can develop because of Cardiac conditions can develop from dental caries wh infection is present and heart valves may be affected. I a serious matter for children and something should be d about it.

For about 30 or 40 years we have known that sm amounts of fluorine in water produce an enormous cha in children's teeth. Fluorine appears naturally in m

[Dr. M. S. Miller]

parts of the world, but before it was introduced into water in other parts of the world tests had to be done. Tests have been done for years because, quite rightly, people are worried about possible future difficulties, if not immediate reactions, that will arise as a result of the injection of any medicament. Whenever studies are made of possible difficulties, some people jump on the bandwagon and go the other way. Some are genuine, but most are not. Most see that the way to make an easy buck is by jumping on the bandwagon. There is no human activity in which that does not happen. Until the end of time some people will object to fluoride on the basis that it is not safe.

In the course of interruptions and interjections, I said that no one can guarantee 100 per cent. that when a medicament is given no adverse effects will occur. I gave examples of the simple administration of relatively small doses of penicillin which have caused, and can cause, adverse reaction.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Dr. Miller: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman let me finish this point?

In Scotland, after his parents had fought for nine years, a child of 11 received more than £100,000 compensation because he was given an injection in hospital of far too big a dose of penicillin. In the judge's opinion, it was the penicillin that caused the child's deafness. Penicillin in a relatively small does could have cured the child's meningitis, but a does of 20 or 25 times the required dose was given. It did not kill the child, but it caused his deafness.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman is making the case that we have been making throughout the debate. Penicillin was injected into that child and other children because it was believed that the child required penicillin. It was not in the belief that some other child 100,000 miles away required penicillin and therefore we all had to have it. Does the hon. Gentleman understand the difference?

Dr. Miller: I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that I understand it very well. I shall come to the point about medication of water. I am trying to dispose of two undoubted facts: first, that dental caries is a serious condition; and, secondly, that fluoride in small quantities produces an enormous improvement in children's teeth, although it does not cure every case or prevent dental caries entirely.

Let me discuss the compulsion aspect. Governments have a duty to take certain action, including action in health matters. This Government and previous Governments here and in other countries have seen the terrible disease of caries in children over a period. I should tell the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that Scotland has a very bad record of dental caries, and I was a fully grown adult in Scotland before I realised that one should have one's teeth all one's life.

Mr. Fairbairn: Who does?

Dr. Miller: I remember asking a dentist how long teeth last in a human being, and he looked astonished. He replied that they should last all one's life. How is it that in Scotland one's mother had false teeth before she was 40, and many people have false teeth long before that age? The Government see the problem and wonder what they can do about it.

The Government would be remiss in their duty if they took no cognisance of the problem. Fluoride is at least part of the answer, even though we may discover something better in years to come.

I am sure that the Government discussed various methods of introducing fluoride into children, but they have come up with the right one. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, we cannot rely on whole communities to medicate their children in the same way as middle class parents. Some parents do not look after their children. The poorer sections of the community may have large families and cannot look after their children. However efficacious other methods may be, they do not compare with the ingestion of fluoride from the earliest age, by which I mean before the child was born. It is rather late to have an influence once the teeth are formed. It can be done, but not nearly as well as if fluoride is introduced into the child's body even before the child is born. The only sure way of doing that is to add it to water.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I respect the hon. Gentleman's evident sincerity, but I detected some arrogance and condescension of latterday Socialism towards the working class in his assumption that they could not be trusted to act responsibly in respect of their own health.

In this instance, outstandingly, there can be no justification for Ministers, hon. Members, health or water authorities arrogating to themselves the right to take this decision when individuals can take the decision. Why does he despise what I might call the democracy of the toothbrush?

Dr. Miller: I think that I covered part of that point. I say with humility that I do not need lessons from him as to my attitude to working people — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross requires some proof. Not many Conservative Members grew up in working-class families. I am not saying that none of them did. I spent 20 years as a general practitioner in Glasgow and I saw it happen.

I thought that I had explained that, however good fluoride tablets and toothpaste were for children's teeth, they were not as good as ingesting fluoride. By the time a child is brushing his teeth, it is rather late.

Moreover, who judges the amount of fluoride in toothpastes? Some of them probably contain enormous amounts of fluoride, some of which the child may swallow and which are far larger than the amount required. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) would be very worried if there were evidence that the large quantities of fluoride in toothpaste produced problems. This is a balanced argument and I can see the hon. Gentleman's point, but the matter is not as simple as adding tablets to water. The best way of administering fluoride is to add it to the water supply.

There are other ways of giving fluoride — for instance, in milk. If it is given early enough, putting fluoride in milk is a good way to administer it.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman said that the most important time to get fluoride into a human being was when a child was inside its mother. Is he not concerned that the adulterated water supply will be used with

powdered milk? If a child were fed bottled powdered milk instead of breast milk from its mother, it would imbibe 100 times more fluoride. Is not the hon. Gentleman as a doctor worried about a child receiving such a high level of impurity at a tender age?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have spent many hours on the Bill and these matters have all been discussed at some stage during the Bill's progress. We are on Third Reading. I have taken a relaxed view, but hon. Members are now straying wider and wider of Third Reading. I hope that we can return to the substance of the Bill, which is what we should debate on Third Reading.

Dr. Miller: I gather, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would consider me to be out of order if I attempted to answer that intervention. I should like to do so, but I am precluded from doing so by your democratic decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I take the point about democratic decisions on local health authorities. Although I agree with more than 90 per cent. of the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, I am sure that we abuse the word "democracy" a little.

I do not want hon. Gentlemen to jump down my throat. The comparison that I am about to make is very limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was feeling quite pleased when the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) referred to my democratic decision; but when he went on to suggest that we abused the word "democracy", I began to wonder what he meant.

Dr. Miller: I withdraw the unintended slur on your integrity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have now lost the train of my argument.

I said that we tended to bandy the word "democracy" about a lot. A doctor does not usually say to a patient with an infection "Please may I have your written permission to give you a penicillin injection?" I hope that I was not arrogant or that I forced my ministrations on unwilling patients. I used to say, "Roll up your sleeves and I shall give you an injection."

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Did they say no?

Dr. Miller: No one ever said no.

Mr. Hawkins: Under this Bill they can never say no.

Dr. Miller: I knew that hon. Gentlemen would jump down my throat. I was giving only a small example. I am sure that all Conservative Members accept that it is not possible to get round a committee and ask for everyone's opinion. One does not do that. This is the right way to proceed, and, incidentally, it is a good idea that the local health authorities are to make the decision.

In putting fluoride into water, we are putting into practice what everyone believes in theory — that prevention is better than cure. Surely we should aim at prevention. As I said earlier in the Bill, if scientists were working on a substance which could be added to water which caused as few problems as fluoride causes, and which it was quite evident reduced the rate of coronary thrombosis by 10, 15 or 20 per cent., I should not hesitate to introduce it into the water of this country.

5.16 pm

Mr. Fairbairn: It is always a privilege to follow the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), if for no other reason than that the stupidity of his arguments stimulates one to get one's own arguments right.

It has been no pleasure for those of us sitting behind the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and the Minister for Health and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to have disagreed with them on this Bill, any more than it has been a pleasure to disagree with the management of the Bill. Some Conservative Back Benchers—like some on the Opposition Back Benches—take the view that the measure is totalitarian and therefore unacceptable. Whether or not we believe it to be a totalitarian measure, I am sure we believe that evidence to suggest that it is justified is not available, while the evidence to suggest that it is unjustified is only too convincing. It is therefore with a sense of sadness that I come to the end of our deliberations on the Bill, 24 hours after we entered the Chamber to discuss it — at any rate, to await its discussion.

May I deal, first, with the remarks of the Minister for Health. If I may say so without recrimination, I think that he dealt with the matter once again with flippancy and a lack of understanding of the genuine fears and principles of those who have appeared in this Chamber, in Committee, on Report and in other places. He dealt with our views with flippancy and insult. I do not say that in any sense of rage; I say it, I hope, with a sense of responsibility. I do not believe that it has yet been understood—I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) understands it, because he is a man of sensitivity—that those of us who oppose the Bill do so out of deep principle, deep understanding and—for some of us—deep experience.

Sir Dudley Smith: Our hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, was far less flippant, and far more relevant, than our right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health in his unfortunate intervention.

Mr. Fairbairn: I agree. I do not wish to be personal, and I do not wish to be vindictive, but I think that a matter of such principle as the one we are debating is of the greatest importance. I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), a Scottish colleague of mine, understands that I, and all those of my view, do not hold that view because we are prejudiced, or fluoridised, or whatever it may be. We hold it out of conviction. The Bill is a matter of conviction; it was introduced by the Government as a matter of conviction, although they ratted on the conviction by pretending that a free vote was a free vote when it was not.

Nothing gives me less pleasure than to say anything disrespectful to my colleagues, but I thought that the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—it sounds like a lesser tube station—on Third Reading was disgraceful. It was sanctimonious and insulting to the House, and I do not think that he addressed himself at all to the principles that we have been discussing. All that the hon. Member said, in that ghastly Socialist way, was "Oh, well it is good for little girls' teeth and the working classes", as if the working classes cannot

[Mr. Fairbairn]

look after themselves. My God! I have seen hundreds of thousands of working class people all my life, and they can all look after themselves. For a Socialist spokesman to suggest that the working classes cannot look after themselves, so that some goddamn Government have to come along and do it for them, is an insult to the people that he pretends to represent.

The working classes can look after themselves a damn sight better than bearded weirdies on the Opposition Front Bench. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has holes in his teeth. If I could see through the hon. Gentleman's beard I could see whether he has holes in his teeth. They accept the concept that the working classes, whoever they are supposed to be, whom the hon. Gentleman presumably imagines he represents, need a bureaucracy and a Government and that they need laws. Because they are not able to brush their teeth and do not know what to do about their teeth, their teeth fall out.

There is the real, real story of Socialism. Opposition Members do not believe that there is any responsibility, any personality, any significance in the people of this country. They hate them and despise them and believe that they cannot even look after their own teeth. That is a great insult. The great people of this country are the working classes. They understand; they know what their teeth are about; they know what their views are about; they know what everything else is about. It takes some strange, bearded Socialist to tell those people that they are no good, and so the hon. Gentleman supports the Bill.

The hon. Member for Hamilton—I mean Bothwell.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North) : The hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on both counts.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman is called Hamilton. He cannot lie straight in bed and I cannot remember his constituency, but whoever he is he is sitting there gibbering and agreeing that the Labour party takes the view that the working classes—as Labour Members care to despise them—should be regarded as incapable of looking after themselves. That is the message I have received over the years in the House. Labour Members, far from realistically and honourably believing in human beings, do not even trust them. They do not like them. They do not think that they can even brush their teeth and they want the water to do it for them. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may giggle. They may laugh. That is the true message of Socialism and of the Bill. The hon. Member for the tube station, whose name I cannot remember——

Mr. Dobson: Would the hon. and learned Member recognise, if he insists on calling it a tube station, that its official name is Kings Cross St. Pancras? I represent both stations, together with Euston.

Mr. Fairbairn: It seems a terminal case but I would not want to include Kings Cross because that is where we arrive from Scotland and that is where we get away from frightful people like the hon. Member. It was he who made that condescending and appalling statement that he regards caries as a major complaint. He regarded caries as a major complaint? Caries! Occasionally having something wrong with one's teeth! Does he regard pimples as difficult, or a cough? [AN HON. MEMBER: "Piles".] No, piles are much too serious. Does he regard dandruff and other minor complaints as serious? Of course they are not. It seems that we are being asked to say to ourselves, "Here we have the working classes: they cannot look after themselves. What shall we do about it? Why not doctor the water supply? What other things are they suffering from? Athlete's foot? Put something in for that too. Nettle rash? Put something in for that too. Overbreeding? Put something in for that too."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very entertaining, but it has little to do with Third Reading. We should get back to the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was on Fifth Reading. There has been much heat in our debates. There has been much argument. There has been much agreement between parties and across parties. There has been much humour. But we should not lose sight of anything. We do not want the sort of condescending, ridiculous Socialism from the hon. Member for East Kilbride who says that in his lifetime he has seen many people with bad teeth and we should therefore doctor the water. We do not want the sort of insult to the people of the country that the hon. Member for the tube station made when he said that people cannot look after themselves, so the Government or someone else should look after them. What we want is principle. The principle is that never in this country I trust will we doctor the water for any reason at all. That will certainly never be done for a trivial reason such as that there are odd people who the Member for the tube station says are not capable of looking after their teeth, and never for even worse reasons such as to keep people in the manner that those of his mind think they should be kept.

For reasons of principle, I object to the Bill. For reasons of principle, I object to the concept. Nothing has convinced me more than the condescending, Socialist, idiotic arguments that I have heard from the tube station opposite. *[Interruption.]* It is not a railway station. It is a tube station.

Even if I did not hold the view — which I think should be held by all principled people — that no one should ever attempt to influence the health of one man by making all his fellows imbibe a substance that might help him, I would not be able to understand how the Government could bring in this Bill. The Minister for Health has with geniality — and without a haircut — flipped away the huge body of evidence from responsible sources that fluoride is poisonous and damaging.

I am now reversing the arguments that I gave on Second Reading. I consider fluoridation wrong on principle, but I think it horrendous and appalling that the Government should dismiss all the scientific and medical evidence that suggests that there is a great risk in adding fluoride to water, especially in proportions that cannot be guaranteed.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride raised the case of the child with meningitis in Scotland. He may now regret having raised it. Five firms of solicitors advised the child's family that they could never prove that the damage to the child's mind, hearing, sight and speech was due to penicillin, or whatever drug was alleged to have been given in overdose.

Dr. Miller: The hon. and learned Gentleman will appreciate that meningitis itself could have caused the damage. That is one of the reasons for the advice given by

his own profession. That advice may still be overturned, of course, and I accept that in such a case the child should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. While I am reluctant to intervene on such a serious matter, it does not arise on the Bill. We really ought to get back to the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: No one could be more reluctant to contradict you than I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this is extremely relevant to the Bill. Even the hon. Member says that the damage might have been caused by the meningitis and not the penicillin. What, then, will happen to the child who suffers deafness, paralysis, kidney failure or cancer? The child's family will go to those five lawyers and say, "I tell you what has happened: the fluoride in the water caused it." And the five lawyers will say, "Nonsense. It may have been the meningitis. It may have been this, or it may have been that." How can what scientists of the greatest distinction claim is likely to be the result of fluoridation ever be proved? How can one part in a million be controlled? What if it is found in lettuces or carrots, or in the water tank?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The safety or otherwise of fluoride, and the proportions in which the Bill proposes it should be administered to water, have been the subject of long debates, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows. We have passed that, and I must ask him to direct his remarks to the content of the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am anxious so to do. I am merely saying, as someone who has represented many people in reparation actions in which I had responsibility for asking, "How can you prove blame", that in this Bill we are laying down provision for what may be the cause of many ailments and sufferings, and that blame cannot be proved. I worry greatly as a lawyer, a Conservative and a human being, because it is wrong to put in water a substance that may cause actions of reparation without proof, and cause disease and death without responsibility—and for what? Is it so that the hon. Member for the tube station can turn his thumb down on what he has the effrontery to call the working classes, who cannot brush their teeth?

5.36 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I shall be brief; to follow the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) will be difficult indeed.

I, too, will vote against Third Reading, although not for the same reasons as the hon. and learned Gentleman. One reason is that the Bill cannot be described as a Socialist Bill because it gives powers to non-elected authorities to take decisions that will greatly affect the public without their having to refer to the public. Decisions will be taken by non-elected health authorities and non-elected water authorities, and, however much nominal consultation there might be, it would not give people the right to say, "No. We do not want it."

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that, even if bodies which sanctioned the use of fluoride were elected, they would still be imposing their elected majorities on people whether or not they wanted it, and that, even if they represented a majority view, there would still be people who wished to reject it but would be unable to do so?

Mr. Wigley: Yes, I do. We debated this point early during Report, and I acknowledged that having a democratic sanction through an elected body, whether it be an elected health authority or water authority, was a second-best alternative to what I suggested — a referendum—which itself was second best to giving the people affected a direct choice. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. None the less, I much prefer that local people — the Government said earlier in this Third Reading debate that they are anxious to have local decisions — have a direct voice in the decision rather than that there be a nominated decision by authorites. I say that for no other reason than that if many members of nominated authorities have been appointed by the Government, they will be greatly aware of the Department's attitude — more so as a result of these debates — and feel that they have a responsibility to follow the clear lead of the Department. For that reason, I am reluctant to see the Bill enacted.

It have listened to debates for many hours, but I am still not convinced that there is no danger from adding fluoride to water. I accept that it is possible that teeth will be better as a result of the addition of fluoride. But there remains a danger to health, as medical experts from various parts of the world have testified. Misgivings remain, but they have not been emphasised in our debates. Even if the balance of opinion tips in favour of better teeth as a result of adding fluoride to water, there is still a niggling doubt. Given that doubt, we should think carefully before compulsorily doctoring water to provide mass medication in this way and forcing it upon people.

In my area of Gwynedd, which is represented by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who has taken a large part in these debates, we have had 30 years' experience of fluoridation. Even after 30 years, there is still a 2 to 1 majority of people against adding fluoride to water, and that must tell us something about the misgivings that exist.

I do not share the misgivings of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, who spoke a moment ago about the responsibility of the state.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman and I share the same views on this matter with regard to our respective constituencies in Gwynedd. He will know that Anglesey community health council, which, after all, is the watchdog set up by the legislature to monitor the health authority in Gwynedd, voted decisively against the fluoridation of water supplies and has done so since 1976.

Mr. Wigley: Yes, indeed. That gives the lie to the belief that local opinion will hold sway. Clearly, unless better mechanisms than those proposed in the Bill are provided, local opinion will not be given the credence that it should receive.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman said about the area in which he lives where there is a 2 to 1 majority among people not to have fluoride in water. My opinion is that that view is due entirely to the spurious propaganda which is disseminated to people. In other words, people are scared and worried, and perhaps they, too, like the lunatic who sends things to hon. Members, will send such things.

This is my opinion. If it were made quite clear to everyone that a small amount of fluoride in water will not, according to evidence, do any serious harm but help teeth,

[Dr. M. S. Miller]

I am sure that the majority view would be overturned. The hon. Gentleman may use words how he likes, but that is how I feel about the matter. Those hon. Members who are against fluoride want to use every method to keep stirring up this issue all the time in spite of the fact that they know, as the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) knows, that it helps.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful for that intervention. When there is argument and debate about whether it is dangerous to add fluoride to water, such debate will itself stir up uncertainty and lead to the doubts that were expressed by the opinion of the 2 to 1 majority who were polled in Ynys Môn. However, the converse of the argument is that if one were to say that, therefore, such matters should not be discussed, the position would be much less acceptable.

I am a layman and I respect the opinions of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), who is a medical man. I can only tell him that I have listened to his opinions and to those of other medical people, and whereas there is probably a balance of medical opinion in favour of the proposal, a significant minority are against it.

Dr. M. S. Miller: A small minority.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman says that they are a small minority, but a body of opinion still exists among specialists who have doubts not about the advantage to teeth, but about the possible ill effects in other directions. In Ynys Môn, fluoride has been added to water for some 30 years. The children who were born 30 years ago and have received its advantages may continue to take fluoride for another 30, 40 or 50 years. Presumably only after they have lived their full lives shall we see the full effects of a lifetime of drinking water that was affected by fluoride, but we have not had an opportunity to see it yet.

Touching on that matter—it arises in my area—is a question that has been debated throughout the passage of the Bill. I refer to clause 1(5) relating to the control of the concentration of fluoride. There is very soft water in my area and a compensating factor is added to it on a cyclical basis. At the beginning of the cycle, the water is so hard that it is impossible but by the end of the cycle it is very soft indeed. I doubt whether the addition of fluoride will be as tightly controlled as the Bill states. I accept that that is the intention but it may not be the practice.

I was addressing myself to what the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross said about the intervention of the nanny state. I take a different view. The state has a responsibility to do what it can to help everyone. I would argue that there are different ways of safeguarding the interests of those whose teeth may be at risk. The state has a responsibility to consider the physical and mental well-being of those who do not want that sort of treatment.

Many people are extremely worried and will lose many nights of sleep because of this matter. They come from all class backgrounds — not just from the upper class, conscientious middle class or working class. People from all classes have made representations to us about this matter, and hon. Members from all parties have experienced that.

I wish that the Government would realise that a grave misgiving exists. They should have considered more constructive alternatives to the Bill.

I refer to two remarks made by the Minister for Health. First, he said that there were many amendments that in the first quarter of an hour of the debate he would have be inclined to accept, but as debate continued he thought th he should not accept them. If the substance of tho amendments required serious consideration, the length the debate should not have been a factor to move t Minister away from accepting them. Indeed, it is surprising and appalling admission to make from t Dispatch Box that it was not the substance of t arguments, but the length of speeches that changed h attitude to the amendments.

Secondly, he said that he could not understand why t issue of freedom arose. Surely, whatever emphasis is p on the matter, an issue of freedom arises. For the Minist not to acknowledge that is to fly in the face of everythi that has been said during the past hours.

5.47 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Havi spent most of the night and nearly all day here, I cann possibly agree with the opening speech of my right ho and learned Friend the Minister for Health when he sa that the Government had won nearly all the argumen They won precious few. I thought that his speech, li many of the others, was facile but superficial and v deserve better.

This is an enabling Bill but it encourages t fluoridation process. It leans strongly on health and wat authorities, despite the suggestion from the Parliamenta Under-Secretary that the Government were adopting neutral stance. There is no doubt that the Bill is bei carried forward in the face of much public opposition. W would not have had such protracted proceedings if th were not true. People do not like staying up all nigh There are misgivings about the Bill and representatio have been made on the matter.

Undoubtedly, the Bill would not have had so ma amendments or have been carried — if that happens without the payroll vote. I am not saying anything agai right hon. and hon. Members. Those of us who ha experience of Government know that there is a collecti responsibility and we must accept that or resign. It is simple as that. The question of PPSs is a more dubio proposition because the posts are not official. PPSs a unpaid aids to Ministers and they should be entitled to free vote, like other Back Benchers.

I do not wish to start bandying names about, happened during the small hours, but it is worth calli attention to the matter. Like some other hon. Membe I have received communications from the national an fluoridation campaign. I largely share the opinions of t hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead (Sir G. Finsbe about the chairman of that organisation. I do not acce that the research that has been carried out is tot However, on going carefully through the list of nam submitted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the ho Gentleman will not start on that list but will addre himself to what is in the Bill. I presume that the list h nothing to do with what is in the Bill.

Sir Dudley Smith: I shall obey your ruling, M Deputy Speaker. I was trying to explain that the Bill w go forward in its present form because of the votes supporters of the Administration. In the list of ho Members who originally told their constituents that th

were against fluoridation, 29 members of the Government, most of them senior, and 10 PPSs are named. There may be many more. That is a matter for concern.

Mr. Best: This Bill is about freedom, which appears not to have been extended to some hon. Members of this House. My hon. Friend may be aware that I have approached many people who, although they have expressed opposition to fluoridation in the past, seem to have changed their minds. Some PPSs—I know of one in particular—have been made to go through the Lobby when some Ministers have not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot embark on that sort of debate now. We are debating the Third Reading of the Bill.

Sir Dudley Smith: Perhaps I can conclude that part of my short speech by saying that I had every intention of voting against the Third Reading. However, to be fair and honest, I must say that my name appears on that list not because I am in favour of fluoridation but because I failed to vote on Second Reading, for good reasons. I was abroad on parliamentary duty with the WEU. The hon. Gentleman laughs but I was away on official parliamentary duty and I think that that is a fair explanation.

The doubts that have been expressed about the Bill as now proposed over the question of safety checks and the paraphernalia of the way in which water authorities carry out the fluoridation process raise a number of queries among hon. Members. I wish to make two points in reply to some of the suggestions that all is calm and beautiful, and will be carried through without difficulty. Experience shows that in all sorts of human activities two problems occur from time to time, sometimes with terrible results, alas. The first is human error, and all societies and organisations are capable of that. The second is mechanical failure, and we know only too well from examples in other parts of the world that that can happen. I am not suggesting that that will happen in respect of the fluoridation process, but those two doubts arise.

When we talked about adding fluoride to the water supply a number of hon. Members called out, "What about chlorine? You are prepared to allow chlorine to be added". Of course I am, because chlorine is added to make water safe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If we embark on that subject we shall be back to the Second Reading debate and the subsequent proceedings of the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members will restrict their comments to what is in the Bill. There is nothing about chlorine in the Bill.

Sir Dudley Smith: All I shall say about fluoride is that it is added to the water supply not to make it safe but for a totally different reason. That point should be underlined.

This is a bad Bill, which has been presented to the House unconvincingly. I share the view expressed earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) that the bureaucratic, ministerial "We know best" attitude brought the measure forward in the first place. It is part of the nannying society of which Conservative Members should have no part. We should keep such things at arm's length. The Bill is before the House because some parents do not take the right precautions and are too idle to make sure that their children clean their teeth and do not eat sweets. Compared with other countries, we have a bad record on that matter. But the Bill provides that all of us must be subjected to the fluoridation of water supplies.

I am willing, like many people, to accept that the risk is minimal. The risk has not yet been proved by the opponents, but undoubtedly there is a risk even though it is minimal. Parliament should not take a chance with such a risk or be tinkering with it. If the public are put at risk to a millionth degree this must be a bad Bill. In the circumstances, therefore, I believe that those who vote against the Bill tonight will be doing their duty on behalf of their constituents, and those who vote for the Bill will be supporting the very worst precepts that have been put forward by any Administration. I hope that the House will reject them.

5.56 pm

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): This is the end of the first stage of the Bill's progress through Parliament. This is the Third Reading debate and I have taken note of your admonitions and rebukes to hon. Members, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they must keep strictly to what is in the Bill, not what they should like to have seen in the Bill. I hope that I do not incur your displeasure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is a debating Chamber and we are bound —provided that it is within the rule that we address ourselves to the Bill—to respond to some of the things that have been said.

First, I wish to comment on something which was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I know that he said it in a most charitable way. However, in his absence, I am bound to put it to him—it will be on the record—that he does a disservice to members of the Labour party and to those of my colleagues who have played a modest part, as I have, in trying to have the Bill examined, when he pretends that the choice simply boils down to the fact that if one accepts the Bill and principle of mass medication enshrined in it one is doing so for a good reason: that it will stop or prevent young children from suffering from toothache. Even if that were so, and hon. Members on both sides of the House could be persuaded that that is what the Bill is all about, we would still have our doubts.

We have repeatedly challenged the belief that fluoride can be put in the water in the quantities prescribed and it will have the required effect. That can be done until one is blue in the face. It can be given to healthy babies in their mother's womb but if when they are born they are not brought up properly to attend to their teeth and to clean them and if their dental hygiene is not perfect and they have too sweet a diet—that is common in this country—they will have bad teeth and toothache, in spite of their parents taking them to the dentist and orthodontist. There is nothing in the Bill which will prevent bad teeth if those teeth are neglected in the way in which I have described.

Mr. Grist: May I point out that in the 14th century the aristocracy had rotten teeth, whereas the workers had perfect teeth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This Bill has nothing to do with the aristocracy in the 14th century. Let us get back to it.

Mr. McGuire: You are right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it has everything to do with bureaucracy in the 20th century in the sense that the people who will carry out this

[Mr. McGuire]

fluoridation which we do not want are not elected. That is one of the disadvantages of the Bill. I do not wish to be led astray by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist). In Committee and on Report we have heard many wonderful little gems and vignettes of historical information on which I hope to draw on some future occasion.

The arguments for fluoridation are presented by doctors, dentists and administrators who appear to be unaware of the legal, ethical and political implications of fluoridation of the water supply. They appear to think that if fluoridation reduces the incidence of dental caries, provided that it does not cause damage to physical health, there is no more to be said on the matter. Assuming that these propositions are true and conceding them at the outset—which is generous considering the real doubt about whether fluoride is dangerous to health—I would still argue that the case against fluoridation is overwhelming. From the legal point of view it is compulsory medication: it is done without the permission of the person at the receiving end. Under English law, medical treatment without consent is permitted by court order only for the mentally ill or for minors with the consent of their guardians. Just as a person forfeits his legal rights by reason of criminal activity, or is unfit by reason of his youth or insanity to exercise them, so too the individual would be placed in a similar position as a result of fluoridation of the water supply. I believe that this is an affront to human dignity, which is explicitly recognised as a major objective in the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. The foundation of the legal rights and interest of the individual guarantees the individual the right to be responsible for his own conduct and interest, chief among which is his health. As John Stuart Mill wrote:

"Over his own body and mind the individual"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. John Stuart Mill had nothing to do with the drafting of the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will speak to the Bill.

Mr. McGuire: With great respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I put it to you that that very principle is being flouted. The Bill enshrines the provision that a person can take away from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from me or from anybody else, whether we like it or not, our right to choose by adding to water a substance that we may not want to receive and from which we shall not benefit. If that contradiction of the rights of the individual held sway, we would never be able to debate the Third Reading of any Bill. I believe that this goes to the heart of the matter.

Fluoridation is mass medication. I do not wish to impugn the integrity of hon. Members, and particularly of my hon. Friends, in whose judgment mass medication of the population by the artificial addition of fluoride to water is a good thing, given that there may be some doubts. Those hon. Gentlemen have not yet been persuaded otherwise, and they believe that this will do a certain amount of good. Nevertheless, it is mass medication. Fluoride is added to water not to make it wholesome and pure, but to treat an assumed medical condition. That is the bedrock of my opposition.

A Conservative Member who intervened in the speech of one of my hon. Friends in an earlier debate—I believe that it was the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central—pleaded that because the majority of health authorit were in favour of fluoridation we should not go down road of legitimising mass medication. I know that this a favourite point of the hon. and learned Member for Pe and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). Mass medication breache principle about which we should be on our guard.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am grateful to the hon. Gentlem for giving way. I did not wish to interrupt his excell speech, but I wish to put something in his mind. If examines the British Pharmacopoeia or SDX list dangerous medicines, one can select substances—su as I listed in an amendment which was not called which, if they are sufficiently diluted, may have all so of lovely litle effects on a person, yet each one is a pois What about adding one part per million of all th substances as well?

Mr. McGuire: I want to press on. The hon. learned Gentleman, in addition to being entertaini stuck to the point that I am endeavouring to develop. Bill proposes to carry out a process to which we obj that is, to mass medicate the population. There has b no examination of whether fluoride is efficacious and do what its proponents claim. Its proponents claim th if it is given to children early enough—preferably, s when they are carried in the womb of healthy moth —it will be beneficial. However, no consideration been given to those who are over the age of 18. If peo have a right to free choice, the views of others cannot imposed upon them. I object to people who wish to p their views on me by coming to a decision with consideration for my wishes. As hon. Members kn there is no alternative non-fluoridated water supply. have one water supply only. Therefore, if the water sup is fluoridated, the result is mass medication.

I come back to the point that we must guard aga losing sight of that principle because a decision has b reached by a majority of elected members of a local he authority or the local water board. We say that that d not matter and that the members of such bodies have right to do this. The individual at the receiving end have no choice.

Mr. Best *rose*——

Mr. McGuire: I will give way to the hon. Gentle in a moment, but I shall lose track of my argument if so now. The hon. Gentleman, I acknowledge, has do good job on behalf of those hon. Members who share opinions, and he has done it skilfully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and Pancras, whom we are told grew a beard overnight w the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawre was addressing the House, has returned refreshe confess to feeling some annoyance rather than hurt a hon. Friend's suggestion that, in opposing the Bill, wish to give a lot of poor children toothache. He see to suggest that under the Bill these poor children woul suffer toothache. That is a bad argument to advanc implies that toothache is the greatest disability that children will have throughout their lives. I believe more serious matters are involved, and that my Friend's suggestion would set us on a slippery pat trying to attend to children's total upbringing by the acting as a nanny. I hope that the Labour party will n want to go down that road, as that would infringe principle of human choice and freedom.

Mr. Best: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I sincerely thank him for the kind words that he expressed about my part in the Bill. We all hold him in high regard for his work on the all-party anti-fluoridation committee. But does the hon. Gentleman not accept that, although the gentle words of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State would seem to imply that the Government do not take a view on this matter, the strident efficacy of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health proves beyond a doubt that the Government believe that fluoride is good for people's teeth? May we not thus conclude that if the Government are so convinced about their case, they are being grossly negligent in not ensuring that every child receives fluoride in his water supply? If the Government do not take any steps to ensure that, does not that say something about the validity of their case?

Mr. McGuire: That is a fair point. I thought that the Minister for Health entertained us in a rather mellifluous way, and I enjoyed some of his comments. I would not describe his remarks as strident. But I agree with the burden of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). This Bill has been introduced by the Government to make clear a matter that was previously thought clear. The problem has arisen following the judgment of the Court of Session in Scotland. The Government say that they will not put fluoride in the water, although they are elected Members of Parliament, but that they will allow it to be done through the back door, by unelected bodies. The hon. Gentleman has asked why the Government do not have the courage of their convictions, but, as he knows, the Government would not have got the Bill past first base if they had that courage. The Bill would have been lost on Second Reading, on the principle of mass medication.

We must not depart from the bedrock of that principle. We are not saying that the Bill could not be improved by giving people the choice of whether to give children fluoride through their milk. The Borrow Foundation has already been mentioned. Incidentally, that would be a much cheaper method. If parents gave their children fluoride through the milk that they drank, there could be no question of mass medication, and it would be a matter of choice. It would cost about £8 million, whereas the cost of fluoridating water would probably be about £156 million with all the attendant problems in that safety could not be guaranteed, and mass medication would be endorsed by a back-door method.

If the Government believe in their own case, they should try to ensure that the other place amends the long title to allow the Borrow Foundation's technique to be introduced. I understand why hon. Members are worried about children, but in that way parents and their children could freely embrace fluoridated milk, with all the benefits that its proponents claim for it.

I end my brief contribution by saying that those of us who have opposed the Bill have done so because it is a bad piece of legislation that infringes upon the principle of personal sovereignty. I shall not repeat what John Stuart Mill said, as I have already made my point. If fluoride is put in the water, we shall be forcing people to consume something that they do not necessarily want. People cannot do without water. It may be said that those who do not want fluoride should live on Malvern water. I suppose that the modern Marie Antoinette would say "Let them drink bottled water." The Government will probably not want to be remembered for that saying. They are already lumbered with another saying, because Ministers seem to be on holiday when such decisions are taken. Thus we could have the saying, "I was on holiday, drinking my non-fluoridated Malvern water."

I have not been persuaded by the Minister for Health's arguments. However, I have been entertained by him, because he is a very good performer. Some of his contributions may have been lighthearted, but sometimes I also am lighthearted. But we were properly rebuked by the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), who got to the nub of the argument in his short intervention.

I know that I do not carry all of my hon. Friends with me in my views, but we are discussing a very serious matter. The Minister for Health may have seemed to treat the Bill rather lightheartedly. I do not think that he meant to do so. We have had a little bit of fun at a time when there is not much fun in life, especially in the present economic circumstances. But on the whole hon. Members have treated the issue very seriously. I am told that the other place has a little more time in which to discuss legislation. However, we have tried to find some time, and we have succeeded in finding prime time today. I think that there were also four Committee sittings on the Bill.

I am told that the other place is more relaxed and intellectually more stimulating and that their Lordships are not worried about whether they are pleasing constituents. After all, they are re-elected all the time. I hope that they will have time to give their minds to the Bill. I believe that they will reject it on the same principle as I reject it—I do not believe in mass medication, or that the case for it has been made out. We should not touch it with a bargepole and I shall vote against Third Reading.

6.17 pm

Mrs. Currie: The Bill is wise and sensible, and I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on bringing it forward so promptly, following the judgment in Scotland, in order to ensure that water supplies can still be fluoridated in those areas of England that want it.

We have listened to many hours of debate on a Bill of three clauses. It has become apparent that those both for and against the Bill's principles share the same motives. They wish to promote health care. Both opponents and proponents of the Bill have also displayed much the same style. We have seen self-righteousness and earnestness on both sides.

It seems to me that the fluoridation of water supplies is safe. We have heard a tremendous amount of nonsense about the dangers of fluoridation. Fluoridation is efficacious in preventing tooth decay not just in children but throughout life. Thus, the Bill is necessary to enable such a highly laudable activity to take place. Fluoridation is also a cheaper activity than all the other possibilities that we have heard about, and is much safer. I worry far less about fluoridation of our water supplies that is controlled by the skilled engineers of the Severn-Trent water authority or of any other water authority — under, I hope, the supervision of staff of health authorities—than I worry about the hit and miss activities that have been proposed, such as the topical painting of teeth, and the fluoridation of toothpaste, tablets and so on. Those who are worried that fluoridation is poisonous or dangerous should be campaigning for the withdrawal of Colgate and

[Mrs. Currie]

all other toothpastes containing such wicked material, because of the danger that they might pose for their constituents.

Mr. Galley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I have listened to hours and hours of debate, and now wish to support the Bill exactly as it stands.

The powers-that-be have decided to leave the question whether the Bill is moral to us as individuals to decide on a free vote. But the Bill should be set against our obligations on health care. At different stages during the debate, hon. Members on both sides of the House have accepted that obligation. We have an obligation on health care. Dental caries is not a trivial disease but causes serious trouble for both children and adults. I should think that every hon. Member suffers from it and knows about it.

Mr. Fairbairn: Rubbish.

Mrs. Currie: The Bill seeks to prevent that disease. The treatment of it involves general anaesthesia, which is a high risk activity, which we should discourage people from engaging in.

We also have an obligation to save public money, which must be set against our moral obligations and our moral dubiety in the Bill. Fluoridation seems to be the cheapest and most efficient way of accepting our health care obligations. Moreover, it will also save enormous sums of money on dentistry.

Mr. Fairbairn: Rubbish.

Mrs. Currie: It is not rubbish. During the early stages of the Bill I was contacted by——

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Currie: I will not give way.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If my hon. Friend addresses me by saying——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Lady is giving way.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Lady giving way?

Mrs. Currie: No, Sir.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Lady departed from her speech to address the word "rubbish" to me. If she talks to me, either she must——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can do nothing about that.

Mrs. Currie: I did not say rubbish. I have not traded insults with my hon. and learned Friend during this stage of the debate, although I may have done so in the dark days of the night.

I accept the principle of the moral dubiety of intervention, and I have no problems with it. We are intervening with mass medication and expecting our health authorities to do so, and indeed they are charged in that way. However, we are also giving health authorities the opportunity to save a great deal of public money on dentistry. I was contacted earlier today by the gentleman who took my place as the chairman of the central Birmingham health authority and who is therefore responsible for the great dental hospital in Birming He told me that immense savings have been mad dental care and that there are now problems fi patients. I do not wish to impute doubtful motiv anyone, but perhaps the reason why we have not h great outcry from dentists in favour of the Bill is that i put them out of business.

The Bill is entirely proper, and proper as Govern business. My only gripe is that the managers of the H did not see it in that way and did not deal wi appropriately. We should be dealing not with Reading now, but with amendments from the other p We should be getting rid of this tiny little unimportan so that we can deal with more important Bills. There such thing as a riskless society. The House knows the of not fluoridating water supplies, and the costs o doing so, and therefore I am delighted to support the

6.22 pm

Mr. Williams: The hon. Member for Derby South (Mrs. Currie) said how pleased she was that th would enable the areas of England that want fluorid to have it. How does she determine which areas wa That is what the debate is about. Indeed, why should about areas when we are talking about people? Ther be such a thing as a dictatorship of the majority, espe regarding the rights of the individual.

The hon. Lady treats the rights of the indiv cheaply. She said that we should support the Bill be administering fluoride is a form of financial effici Capital costs of fluoridation will be between £120 m and £150 million, and costs are more than £20 mil year. Therefore, costs are not insubstantial. The hon. has not spelt out the economies she anticipates. A hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McC said, it would be far cheaper to pursue the process via for schoolchildren at a cost of £8 million than to us method that the hon. Lady advocates. If she is worried about economy, she should change her po immediately because not only is she abandonin important principle regarding the freedom o individual, but she is exchanging it for a false deal will not make the economies that she expects.

What do the Government think that they are up to have gathered from Ministers that the Government b in fluoridation. Why on earth, then, have they cho create, not a uniform system, but a potential sham The Government say that they do not wish to in fluoridation and want to give the right to deci unelected bodies. That is either cowardice or irrespo ity. If they believe that it is good for our people to fluoridation, it should not be left to the arbitrary wh health authorities to decide against it, any more than of us who oppose the Bill believe that it should be the arbitrary whim of authorities to determine to ha That is nonsense. If it is right for one part of the co it is right for another part. If it is wrong for one part country, it is probably wrong for another part. The should not and does not need to be determined on the of parts of the country. We are not dealing with a dru cannot be obtained from any other source. It is readi cheaply available.

The Minister made it clear that he intends throu other place to ensure that non-elected quangos cons elected authorities within their areas. What happ

quangos consult and then ignore the elected authorities? An hon. Member listed all the authorities in his area which had spoken for their electors, but at the end of the day the water authority utterly ignored that advice from the elected representatives and went ahead.

What happens when consultation has been a sham and a farce? I invite the Minister to intervene now and to tell me what he would do if, for example, Manchester local authorities were wholly opposed to the addition of fluoride and the non-elected health authority, regardless of the opinions of the elected representatives and of the public expressed through opinion polls, decided to fluoridate. Would he feel that he had no duty to intervene to ensure that local opinion was taken into account?

Mass medication has created some strange alliances in the House. Conservative Members and I, who rarely see eye to eye, have argued virtually the same case. That should worry the Minister. There are strange alliances both on and across the Benches. We all believe that a fundamental principle is involved. The precedent of mass medication should not be accepted lightly. If it is appropriate to create that precedent in pursuit of healthy teeth, for what is it not appropriate to quote that precedent? On Second Reading my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) and many Conservative Members frequently mentioned the items that they would like to see covered by the precedent. But if the Government had their way, we would not be drinking water but cutting it into cubes and chewing it. Where do we draw the line? Today the Government draw the line at fluoride, but why? What is so distinctive and different about the treatment of teeth from any other medical condition that is not water originating?

At the outset all hon. Members accepted that water must be made pure and healthy to drink. That is common ground. When we take the next step, as the Bill does, the House is saying that whatever a do-gooding health authority or Minister determines as being requisite can be proposed as an addition to the water supply. I can think of far more important health conditions that might be dealt with. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield read a horrifying list on Second Reading, which prompted me to speak in that debate, which I had intended only to listen to. It is clear that this is merely stage one in the use of an easy method of distributing medicine to people who need it and to those who do not.

What about the person who does not want fluoride? We should remember why we are here. The Bill is the result of health authorities being afraid of being taken to court because so many people feel strongly about fluoridation and do not want it at any cost. Why should they have it? What makes the judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, who is muttering to himself, so much better than theirs? Doctors have not always been right and they have not always been able to identify the side effects.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I was merely looking at the figures of a poll in which people were asked:

"Do you think fluoride should be added to water if it can reduce tooth decay?"

The responses were as follows: in Oldham, 77·8 per cent. said yes, as did 76·5 per cent. in Salford, 84 per cent. in Wigan, 81·4 per cent. in Tameside and Glossop, 80·4 per cent. in south Manchester and 78 per cent. in Lancaster.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful for those helpful figures. Being generous to my hon. Friend, the average seems to be 80 per cent. in favour of fluoridation. If we extrapolate that figure to national figures, there must be about 11 million people who do not want fluoride but will be compelled by do-gooders such as him to take it. That is an unjustifiable imposition and represents an abandonment of an important principle.

I recall, when I was in the Department of Industry, being in negotiations with one of Britain's top drug companies about establishing a vitamin C factory in Scotland. The chief executive said that he never took drugs and did not believe in them as he thought them dangerous. He said that one could never be sure what side effects or long-term effects they might have. My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride has said that fluoride has been in the water for 30 years, but how long has it taken asbestosis to emerge? It took many of my right hon. and hon. Friends decades to convince the Department of Health and Social Security and medical authorities that health complaints other than pneumoconiosis could arise from dust in mines.

The postulation that fluoridation will benefit teeth in some areas over a period of 10 or 20 years is a wholly inadequate justification. The fundamental point is that the Government are saying that there will be no choice. What is to happen with the person who bitterly dislikes the thought of fluoridation or the person who is afraid of it? What about their rights? Why should we allow non-elected committees, appointed by a Minister who holds one view at one time and another at another, to impose their do-gooding arbitrary will on everyone? For those reasons, I shall oppose the Bill.

6.34 pm

Mr. Marlow: I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). Perhaps I might tell my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—I think that many of my colleagues agree with me—that we should be grateful if, next time, she would leave her jackboots outside before addressing the House.

I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, were here when my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health opened the debate and whether, like me, you were terrified by his brisk overconfidence. It reminded me of the white-coated, doctor/salesmen who first put Debendox on the market. He said that this subject relates directly to health. Thalidomide was also directly related to health. Mistakes have been made. It is one thing to give ill people drugs—and to give them a choice—when those drugs might have unfortunate side effects. It is quite another to force people with no disease or complaint to have adulterated water supplies which might have far-reaching effects of which we do not yet know.

The Leader of the Opposition is concerned that our country should be a proper place in which to bring up his children. I am sure that we all agree. I am concerned for my children. The whole country is concerned for the future of children. We all ensure that our children clean their teeth—perhaps with a fluoride toothpaste. We might give them tablets with fluoride in them or take them to the dentist and get fluoride painted on their teeth. That is our choice. If we do not want to give it that way, we might install plant to dilute fluoride into our personal water supplies. I am appalled by the suggestion, and the calumny of the Opposition, that working-class families, whatever they might be, do not care for their children or are incapable of making sensible decisions about their

[Mr. Marlow]

children's welfare. It is as if Opposition Members are saying that parents cannot be trusted with their children. I was upset and surprised to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South echo exactly those sentiments.

The Bill will defile our country's ecosystems. We have been here for generations and there is a balance in nature. We have eaten and drunk various things which have made us what we are. It is now suggested that some monstrous substance be stuffed into our water supplies. We all remember our chemistry classes at school and know what the halogens are. They are iodine, bromine, chlorine and fluorine, the most hideously strong agent of all. Chlorine, which is less strong than fluorine, was used in the first world war to gas thousands of our soldiers, and now we are putting fluorine, or rather fluorides, which are a rat poison, into our water supply. Moreover, we are doing it with a mind-boggling self-confidence. There is a real chance that something will go wrong and it is up to the House to do what it can to stop it.

Mr. John Patten: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in certain parts of the country, water undertakers have to add all sorts of substances such as sulphuric acid and hydrochloric acid to improve the quality of water? Even in the dying stages of this debate, does my hon. Friend not recognise that we must not cause unnecessary public alarm?

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend knows full well the difference between the filtration process and adding something extra and unrequired which has an effect on the human body.

The experts have got together and decided. It was the experts who designed the hideous tower blocks that we have in our inner-city areas. It is the experts who quite often, like the Gadarene swine, get it wrong and plunge over the cliff top. We can only hope that, this time, they have not made a terrible mistake. I shall quote once again four lines from Hilaire Belloc:

"Oh! let us never, never doubt
What nobody is sure about!
For people who are in the know
Assure us that it must be so."

They know what is best for us. This is the nanny state. It is pure, unadulterated, interventionist Socialism, and it is being put forward by my Conservative Government.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I have come here to vote against the Bill, but if my hon. Friend goes on in that way a number of opponents of the Bill will be deterred from doing so.

Mr. Marlow: I cannot account for my hon. Friend's decision. He will hear other speeches too, and they may have an equal or an opposite effect on him.

Why has the Bill been produced? It has been produced because of something that happened in a law court in Scotland and because the Civil Service told the Government that they must take action. My Conservative Government would not have brought forward such a measure on their own account. It is not in their manifesto. It is not, politically, a thing that my Government would wish to do. The Civil Service told the Government to get on with it, and that is why the Bill was produced.

When my right hon. and learned Friend introduced the Third Reading, he said that he had won all the arguments. The arguments that he won were those approved Labour party conference in 1978. I hope that my ri and learned Friend is pleased about that. He also the Government had won all the votes. Of those to exercise their discretion during this marathon my right hon. and learned Friend has won very few of the votes.

The Conservative party is above all about choice. We once had a slogan, "Set the people fre is what we should do. We cannot be certain measure will not have a terrible effect on the peopl country. I am against it and I oppose it.

6.43 pm

Mr. Galley: My right hon. and learned Fri Minister for Health stated earlier that he co understand the liberty argument on this issue. As Yorkshireman, I find the connection as plain as a p When tha's in Yorkshire, if somebody takes summ from thee, tha's likely to be upset. If somebody t choice away from thee tha's likely to be upset bec liberty is affected. That is the crux of the matter

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Not in Derbyshire.

Mr. Galley: Perhaps not in Derbyshire Nottinghamshire. I shall refer to Derbyshire in due

Apart from the liberty argument, there is argument about democracy. The point about de has been made many times, but the Treasury Be not addressed itself to it and has not answered th The situation in a nutshell is that a very small mi the House, on the basis of the votes so far, is likel through a measure that will be implemented by elected undemocratic authority on the advice and of another non-elected democratic authority, with public say at all.

Furthermore, a number of those who will vote measure in the House have said that their hearts a what they are doing and that they have had to squ consciences in some way. I am told that they have their consciences by suggesting that this is si enabling measure. It is an enabling measure des allow an undemocratic institution to ask democratic institution to do something that is du health terms. I appeal to those of my colleagues at their consciences before they finally cast their

Logically, once one accepts the princ compulsory mass medication, why should one pursue the principle further to enforce compulso vaccination? Why do we not totally ban smoking a forms of tobacco consumption? Why do we not to the consumption of alcohol? Why do we not for who are opposed to it on principle to hav transfusions when they are ill?

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire (Mrs. Currie), who has left the Chamber, argues a health costs. She suggests that the cost to the state caries is such that we must compel everyone to tak water a substance that may be poisonous. Surely smoking and the lack of vaccinations must rep higher cost to the NHS and the taxpayer than denta People die from measles, but we do not compel be vaccinated. Deformed children are born to women who contract rubella. People have been k die from whooping cough. We do not compel vacc

in those cases. It may be said that there are doubts about the safety of whooping cough vaccine for certain people. There are doubts about fluoride, too. It is a vital principle that if there is an element of doubt—if, when the evidence has been weighed, there is any evidence that suggests that fluoride may be a poison—it should not be added to public water supplies in such a way that the people cannot say nay.

It would be different if the person who wanted a fluoridated water supply could have one piped to him while his neighbour who did not was connected to a non-fluoridated system. We could promote fluoridated toothpaste, and the Health Education Council could launch a major campaign to persuade people to use it. That would be fine. That is the principle upon which we have worked in health matters for a long time. It is the principle of education. Considerable progress has been made as a result of education efforts, especially in relation to smoking-related diseases.

We are moving away from the principles of liberty, democracy and good practice which have determined our health care and health prevention for a long time.

This is a very un-Conservative measure. It is essentially a Socialist measure of the worst kind.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has always been a covert Socialist? It was when the right hon. Gentleman was Minister of Health in a Tory Cabinet that fluoridation was introduced.

Mr. Galley: Much as I respect the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), he may err. I suggest that he has erred on one or two occasions in the past—especially on the two occasions when he suggested that people should vote Labour.

The philosophical basis of the Conservative party provides no sound ground for compulsory mass medication. How far back can we go? Perhaps one should not suggest that Thomas Hobbes was a Conservative philosopher. The only thing that I would take from Hobbes is the suggestion that life is "nasty, brutish and, short". I suggest that the Bill is also "nasty, brutish and, short".

Perhaps the first real Tory philosopher was Viscount Bolingbroke who wrote "The Patriot King", which I am sure the Minister has read. There is the picture of the patriotic monarch acting on the principles of the benefit of the population and seeking to prevent bureaucratic abuse. The monarch prevents the bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and officials from abusing the population. That is the basis of our paternalism. The paternalism of the Tory party is against abuse of power by the bureaucrats, but the Bill puts power into the hands of the bureaucrats. Our tradition, whether one takes the libertarian strand or the paternalist strand of Tory philosophy, is against the principles of the Bill. The Bill is against liberty, it is against democracy and, to some extent, it is against health. La liberté, la démocratie and la santé is the cry of the Tory Members.

6.50 pm

Mr. Best: We are almost at the end of the lengthy first part of the passage of the Bill. Although I am not the last person to speak in the Third Reading debate, I should like to thank all hon. Members from both sides of the House who have taken a stand. I believe that I express my heart-felt thanks on behalf of their constituents and many other people for having taken that stand.

Fluoridation of water supplies is illegal. We know that because that was the result of the Strathclyde case. That is why this unfortunate and miserable Bill has been introduced by the Government.

Mr. Bill Walker: Has my right hon. Friend any knowledge of any other occasion when a decision in a Scottish court has required a Bill to be introduced to effect legislation in England and Wales?

Mr. Best: I cannot assist my hon. Friend. No, I cannot recall such a time, although I have great respect for the law of Scotland and I believe that in many respects the legal system there leads that in England and Wales. We are about to see that with the passage of legislation soon—legislation that has been delayed as a result of this measure, which the Government originally scheduled to be passed through the House in one day, but has taken four days. That is an expression of the strength of feeling in the House about the Bill.

The Bill is unwanted by a large number of the members of the Government. They have far too many problems on their hands. The Bill is unwanted by our constituents. Can anybody doubt that we are speaking as we are not just because we feel deeply on a matter of principle but because we know only too well that our constituents do not want the Bill to go through the House of Commons? That is why we are taking this stand and it is right, and our duty, that we should do so.

Some 111 amendments have been tabled to what is effectively a two-clause Bill. I pay tribute to the ingenuity of hon. Members who have tabled amendments. What has struck me about the amendments is that, more than in any other Bill that I have seen pass through the House, they were all designed to be helpful. They were all designed to try to ameliorate a Bill that is bad ab initio. All the amendments were tabled in good faith and raised matters of great concern.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who I am glad to see in his place on the Treasury Front Bench, has conducted himself throughout the Bill with the courtesy that we have come to expect of him. It has been a pleasure to have him reply to these debates, but he has not helped as much as we would have hoped. His deceptive pleasing style has hidden what might at first sight not be apparent. He seeks to let us feel that the Government do not really care about whether health authorities ask water undertakers to fluoridate water supplies. That is not the case. One has only to listen to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health to realise that the Government are pushing what they believe—I accept that they believe it in good faith—are the benefits of fluoride.

If that is so, what are the Government doing? Do they really believe that the fluoride is beneficial beyond peradventure? If they do, is it not an act of negligence for the Government not to ensure that all children in the country receive those benefits? Is the answer not that there is, lurking somewhere deep in the bowels of Government, some niggling suspicion, some great concern, which has not yet found a voice, which is just a squeak at the moment but which may develop into a gigantic roar at some stage, of which we are the precursors? Surely, that is the only reason why we now have a permissive Bill, rather than a Bill that takes the matter on board full square and says, "Fluoride is right and therefore everyone should have it."

[Mr. Best]

No, the Government do not fully believe that fluoride is right. If they did, they would have introduced a different Bill.

Those of us who are against the Bill do not say that nobody should have fluoride. We believe in individual choice. People in Sweden have been taking fluoride tablets for years, and it has been as effective as they think it is, or as effective as it may be. There is no reason why people in this country should not take fluoride in tablets if they so wish, exercising their individual choice. However, this is not a Conservative measure. It is not a measure that one expects from this Government. It has been brought forward by civil servants because they have seen the Strathclyde decision and feel that it is necessary to introduce the Bill. As a result, the Government have found themselves on the horns of this dilemma—not really believing in the Bill but having to introduce it because, on advice, they see no other alternative.

Who are those Labour Members who opposed the Bill? They are all the nice ones. They are the ones with whom we like to go on parliamentary visits. They are all the ones with whom we care to have a drink. They are all the decent ones. That is to be expected. This shows that all those Labour Members who are against fluoridation are the ones who are not bound by rigid dogma. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is bound by rigid dogma, or he would not be on the Front Bench. He would be on the Back Benches, and able to express his own opinion. Those who are not so bound are able to express their views.

Mr. Dobson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will cast his mind back—I know that it seems a long time ago—to the Second Reading debate. I made it clear then that the views that I was expressing from the Dispatch Box were my own views. Those are the views that I have expressed throughout, and I would not have expressed them had I not held them.

Mr. Best: That does nothing to satisfy me as to the hon. Gentleman's sense of judgment.

I made a short speech last night. I have been trying to speak in this debate for the past 19 or 20 hours, but I shall keep to a short speech now as this is Third Reading. I have sought to move sensible amendments, like all other hon. Members, to try to improve the Bill. The benefits of fluoride are by no means certain. If they were certain, how could it be that non-fluoridated areas have equal or lower rates of incidence of dental caries compared to fluoridated areas? If fluoride is of such benefit to the teeth, why do not the citizens of all those European countries that used to fluoridate their water supplies but have now ceased to do so have their teeth dropping out all over the streets? They do not. There is no noticeable difference. That does not say much for the benefits of fluoride, supposed or otherwise. People are looking after their teeth much better than they did 10 or 15 years ago. There has been a general improvement in dental health which we all welcome, but it has little to do with the provision of fluoride in water supplies.

The dangers of fluoride were fully discussed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). I could go over his speech again, but that would not be appropriate. I do not wish to add anything to what he said in his lengthy speech earlier.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: If I intervene now need to try to catch Mr. Speaker's eye later and will, therefore, be brought to an end sooner. Doe Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) the weight of argument has been overwhelming side of those who oppose fluoride? He has men hon. and learned Friend the Member for Bu Lawrence). At the end of the day the an campaign would have won if it had been a fair

Mr. Best: That is absolutely right. I do not f the fears expressed by some hon. Members possible damage to health from fluoride. So studies that have been mentioned are by no mea but I have been in the courts for far too long not to the concept of the benefit of the doubt. Whe a reasonable doubt that must be resolved f against the proposition of doing anything like substance in the water supply. That is a fu principle. So long as a scintilla of doubt remai fanciful doubt—we should not allow the Bill t tonight.

My hon. Friends do themselves no service ridicule the argument by referring to genetic mice, rats, frog-spawn or tadpoles. We do no arguments on such matters. I need do no more the words used by my hon. Friend the Under-Se State for Health and Social Security in a reply said:

"The question of dental mottling was studied in States of America before the introduction of pu fluoridation. It was found that at a concentration of about two parts per million an increasing proportion had mottled enamel that was apparent and ob aesthetically."

Heavens above. He was talking about two million. The Bill does not provide for a maxim part per million, but says merely that we should it right

"so far as is reasonably practicable."

The level could be as much as 1·5 milligra litre. Do we have the right to impose that on t I suspect not.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of St favourably from what Lord Jauncey said in the S judgment when he said:

"if the drinking water in Strathclyde is fluoridated to million there is likely to be a very small incr prevalence of mottling of a type which will only be at very close quarters and which is very unlikely to aesthetic problems for the owners of the teeth." *Report*, 28 January 1985; Vol. 72, c. 56.]

That is no good at all. We do not want any mottled. We do not want people to say, "That You will not notice it if you do not come too cl is not good enough for my constituents.

The problem about the question of fluoride i those biochemists who are in favour of th fluoridation of water supplies accept that t between what they regard as the optimum part per million—and that level which lead fluorosis and other problems which have articulated by my hon. Friends is far too slim dangerous. It is unacceptable to the House.

The other problem is the concept of "we k A patronising attitude is inherent in such a Bil we not trust people to make their own decis individual health? What is so terrifying to

believe that fluoride is so beneficial? Why are they so frightened to articulate their case in public and to let the public decide? Why must the action be taken via the back door and through the non-elected health authorities? We should have a full debate and let the people decide. That was the gravamen of my amendments. My constituents are capable of making a judgment. They know best. After all, they elected me to the House.

It might be said that it would be an odd Minister who would add something harmful to the water supply. Those who say that should cast a glance at the Opposition Front Bench. Can they be certain that there will be no odd Minister in the future? I suspect that they cannot. They might look at their own Front Bench sometimes and have the same misgivings. It is an odd Minister, indeed, who would introduce such a measure. It is an odd Bill. It has odd effects and it has some odd supporters.

I have tried in good faith to amend the Bill. I have had discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the Minister of State, the Patronage Secretary, the Deputy Chief Whip—and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all. Unfortunately, those discussions were to no avail. Some concessions have been made and I pay tribute to the Government for having made them. However, those concessions are not enough. They are not enough for me because they are not enough for my constituents who want the right to decide for themselves.

The fight does not end here. It merely begins as we go together into the Division Lobby to vote against the Third Reading of the Bill tonight. The message for the other place and for the people of the country is that we care for that delicate and precious right that is so easily crushed and for which we must be ever vigilant. I talk of individual freedom.

7.7 pm

Mr. Crouch: My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has done a noble service to the House over many hours and some days. Not everyone will agree with him and the votes show that the majority do not agree with him. However, we have a duty in the House to respond to our constituents. None of my constituents has asked me for mass state medication, but quite a few over the years have pleaded with me to remember that I am a democrat. One constituent wrote to tell me that he had fought in the last war to preserve freedom in our country. That might be an overstatement. Perhaps the Front Bench in its wisdom and the Department of Health believe that this measure has some scientific and medical merit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn has been gentle and restrained in his arguments. He made his attitude clear in his speech today. Some of my colleagues who have supported him in his opposition to the Bill have accused him of not being strong enough. I am not very strong against the Bill. I was in two minds about it. Some years ago I was much against fluoridation. I was persuaded that perhaps there was a case for it.

I have been involved in the medical world. I served 14 years on a health authority. I was not elected. Nobody was elected. Some local authority members were elected by their local authorities and transplanted to the health authorities later by the Secretary of State and others. I was put there by the Secretary of State. I had great regard for those health authorities and for the way in which they faced up to problems of delegated authority an administering the National Health Service in England an Wales.

However, not one member of a health authority whon I have ever met knows what it is to represent people. It i a Member of Parliament or a councillor—an electe person—who knows what it is to represent people an to face up to people at an election, to answer thei correspondence, and sometimes to answer their cris d coeur. I have been getting such complaints and cries o restraint about the Government embarking on mas medication. Perhaps there is some merit in the Bill. Ther is a little merit in it. It is a little Bill that we shall nov decide upon. Let us see how small it is. The short title i just a few words, to

"Make provision with respect to the fluoridation of wate supplies."

It has taken us four days to discuss the Bill. Why? Becaus there are some hon. Members who are so concerned t preserve the freedom, even a modicum of freedom, whic is so treasured in this country and which we have a dut to preserve. We have a duty to ask the Government, i their medical wisdom and health knowledge, "Do yo think that you are right to do this? Is it right?"

I understood that there was a free vote on the Bill. I wa sent a "Whip", as all hon. Members are sent a "Whip" These proceedings were underlined once—I am givin no secrets away—and it says that there will be a fre vote on the measure. A free vote is a free vote. Each an every man in the House has the same "Whip" with a fre vote on it.

There is a free vote on another Bill before the House I spent two and a half hours on that Bill in Committee thi morning. It is called the Unborn Children (Protection) Bil promoted by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr Powell). There was a free vote on it a week or so ago, o a Friday. The Secretary of State for Social Services an the Minister for Health exercised their free vote on tha occasion, and voted against that measure. Other Member of the Government voted the other way. We all exercise our free vote on that day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I hop that the hon. Gentleman will stick to this Bill and not b diverted to another.

Mr. Crouch: I certainly will. All that I am seeking t say is that on that occasion, when there was a free vote Ministers exercised their right to vote freely as they fel they should. The Government said that they were neutra about the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman i a very experienced parliamentarian. He knows that Thir Reading debates must be restricted to the contents of th Bill before us.

Mr. Crouch: Of course I accept your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am merely illustrating the situation tha we face today with this Bill. I should have thought that i was a neutral Bill in the view of the Government becaus they said that there was a free vote. However, we know from the past few days that a neutral stance has not bee taken by the Government. They have been marchin through the Lobby to force through the measure against th wishes of the minority, which happens to be those of u who do not like mass medication.

[Mr. Crouch]

Therefore, all that I am saying is that I do not like the difference, when we have a free vote on one Bill, which goes one way, and in this case when it goes another. There is a different interpretation in this case. If I had been the Minister for Health faced with the Bill, I would have exercised my right freely and voted against it. The House might ask me why. I said that I was in two minds and also that for many years I had some concern about health matters. But I am not persuaded of the argument. The medical arguments in favour are worthy of study. They can be accepted. Many people, perhaps the majority in the House, on a free vote, accept them. They can even be convincing in those arguments, but I am still not persuaded. Many of us are not persuaded. Why? Because we do not want state medication. It is as simple as that. No matter how good those arguments are, I simply do not want Big Brother—what a horrible phrase, but we must use it—or Whitehall knowing best about the health of people—men, women and children. It is wrong. We must say so. As a Member of Parliament, an elected representative, I must say that I believe that it is wrong.

When I faced the matter with two minds about it, thinking that perhaps I could accept those arguments, I had to say to myself as a democrat and an elected Member that on balance I really could not accept the measure because I could not say that I believed that the state should introduce this small measure ruling our lives in this way, to take decisions on health away from people. I do not like compulsory mass medication and I do not like state medication.

7.16 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members present feel, in the words of the witticism, that we have begun to exhaust time and encroach upon eternity because the debate has been going on for such a long time. If there is the result in the next Division that no doubt the Government confidently expect, I believe that we shall also make great encroachments upon individual liberty.

I am most disturbed to see the conversion of Her Majesty's Government to utilitarianism and that they feel that the greatest good of the greatest number, an exploded political theory, should justify their promotion of such legislation. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary imagines himself as a latter-day Bentham who will eventually end up stuffed in a glass case in one of our more ancient universities. However, I hope that he lasts longer than Jeremy Bentham lasted in University College, London.

I believe that we are making a fundamental mistake as Conservatives in promoting a measure based upon that principle. There is a fundamental difference between, for example, chlorinating the water supply to make the water pure and putting fluoride in it to influence the physiological processes of the human body. There is a fundamental difference between the purification of water and the form of mass medication that is thrust upon us in the Bill.

One thing that has become painfully clear throughout the many hours that we have debated the measure in the House is that all the arguments, apart from those of Front Bench Members, have come from opponents of the Bill, with one or two exceptions, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I had not originally thought of that reason for opposing the Bill, having heard that she was to make a speech convinced that my course of action was ever more right.

As we look through the Division lists, we see that Government have been sustained by the votes of Opposition and of Cabinet Ministers dragooned after heavy day's labour in their Departments into the Lobby the early hours of the morning, looking tired and hagga and in need of a great deal of sympathy from those of who have opposed the Bill. However, I am afraid th there comes a time when one's adherence to politi principle should outweigh the natural sympathy that have for the sensibilities of such individuals. Therefo there is no reason why we should apologise for debati the Bill in the full and extensive way that we have.

It will be remarked upon in another place in due cou that the Government have been able to get the Bill throu the House on a tiny minority of individuals who have n been dragooned into the Lobby on what is ostensibly a fr vote. For example, in Division No. 114 at 2.9 am on February the Government managed to achieve 105 vot They needed 100 in order to carry the closure. In th debate the Government were sustained by seven Labo votes, two Liberal votes and by my hon. Friend t Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) who we into the wrong Lobby by mistake. That is something f which he will have to answer in the hereafter. Howeve Division after Division has been conducted on that basi

Mr. Michael Brown: It pains me deeply that I ma that grievous mistake. However, I hope that the penan I have done during the last 30 hours will be some redres

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot go over wh happened in previous debates. We must restrict this deba to what is contained in the Bill.

Mr. Hamilton: When the Bill reaches the House Lords, I am sure that their Lordships will bear in mind th there is no majority in this House for the Bill. There h not been a majority of Members voting for the Bill. The has not even been, except in the last Division, a majori of Conservative Members of Parliament voting for th Bill. When their Lordships get to work on it, I am sure th they will find that the Bill is incapable of improvemen and I hope the result will be that they will throw it out

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galle took us back to 1749, the date of the first publication "The Idea of a Patriot King" by Lord Bolingbroke. should like to go back 100 years before that date Viscount Falkland, who said that when it is not necessa to change it is necessary not to change. I believe that th is a more fundamental Tory principle than the utilitaria principle upon which the Bill is based. Therefore, the mu and inglorious followers of the Government who hav proceeded through the Lobby night after night during th passage of the Bill through this House have, I believe acted in a fundamentally un-Tory way. I do not believ that the gentleman in Whitehall knows best or that th unelected gentleman in the water authority knows be about individuals who have a conscientious objection being medicated in the way that this Bill will no dou bring about in many areas.

All too often in recent years this House has supporte the busybody state. We have made the wearing of se belts compulsory and the wearing of crash helme compulsory. Now the House is to make the medication

the water supply compulsory. I do not believe that we as Conservatives were elected to support the busybody state. Where is the principle that underlies it? Where will it all end? There is a very strong anti-smoking lobby. I am not a smoker, and I find the habit offensive, but I would not dream of telling somebody that he should not smoke because it would damage his health; nor would I dream of saying that he should not drink because alcohol may damage his health. Are we to say that because people catch colds in the winter everybody should be compelled to wrap up warmly and that anybody out in the street wearing clothes that are insufficiently thermally insulated——

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that I should prolong my remarks any longer than is necessary. Therefore, I am reluctant to give way to the hon. Gentleman, who of course has considerable natural thermal insulation of various kinds.

Are we to say that people should go through the winter wrapped up according to some officially laid down coefficient of thermal insulation, or else they will render themselves liable to various illnesses which will not be conducive to their survival? Are we to say that during the summer all ladies are to carry parasols, otherwise their features will be sunburnt, which is not aesthetically acceptable and does not keep their skin in perfect condition? Of course not. However, this may be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the proposition.

I believe that we should apply hard tests to legislation of this kind. For that fundamental reason I do not believe that the Government should dictate what is best for individuals in the privacy of their own homes. The Government should not be able to dictate what form of medication ought to be applied. Therefore, I oppose the Bill. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose it in the Lobby. I hope that when the Bill reaches another place it will be mangled out of all recognition so that it is no longer suitable to be placed upon the statute book and that that will be the end of it.

7.25 pm

Sir John Page: The attendence in the Chamber this evening is a compliment to the "stickability" of Members of Parliament. Nearly all hon. Members who went through the long watches of the night are here 21 hours later. I do not believe that those who were abed yesterday evening

"Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here."

Nevertheless, I believe that for all hon. Members who are here this has been a memorable experience. The great memory was the amazing tour de force by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). Occasionally his lengthy speech made one feel that one was sleeping under an enormous Swiss duvet: that one was going to be completely smothered by his oratory. Nevertheless, it was a great performance. We also enjoyed —this is rather a "station occasion" today—the speech of the hon. and learned Member for "King's Cross for Perth" who introduced a number of excellent shafts of humour into the debate at all hours of the day and night.

On behalf of all the water undertakers, one of the most vital—*[Interruption.]* I should prefer my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) not to laugh, because this is a very serious matter for the water industry. This is one of the most carefully run, vital and public spirited industries in the country. We thought that the purpose of the Bill was to clarify or redefine a position that already existed. I hope that I shall not lose my reputation for total neutrality on the matter of fluoridation when I say that if the Bill becomes an Act not one extra gallon of fluoridated water will come through any tap in our country because of it. The industry feels that the Government were wise and sympathetic to accept four out of the five main amendments and suggestions that were made. I am grateful to the Government for their willing acceptance of all those suggestions, apart from one. I have to admit that the suggestion that the Government did not accept was the most important.

Mr. John Patten: That was an oversight on our part.

Sir John Page: We hoped it would have been made mandatory upon the water industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must stick to what is contained in the Bill, not to what he would like the Bill to contain.

Sir John Page: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in line 8 we still have "may" instead of "shall". Unfortunately, that word is still there. I am grateful for the fact that lines 10 to 13 on page 1 of the Bill were accepted by my hon. Friend. This important proviso will be very helpful in governing the attitude of the public towards water undertakings and fluoridation. We know that the Government are looking again — dare I say this — at emergency water supplies. We are grateful for the fact that our ideas on tolerances were acceptable and that the technical aids will enable the industry to serve the public properly. We are grateful for the Government's acceptance of our ideas on retrospection to confirm the legality of existing arrangements.

I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, whose courtesy and good humour has transcended a day or so which has sometimes been bad-tempered, but which has been passionate, well-informed and sometimes humourous. The unaccustomed bouquets that I am giving him may be kept fresh by being taken home and put in vases of the wholesome water delivered through the tap of his hereditament.

7.30 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I do not wish to detain the House long, but some of my hon. Friends have suggested that as I represent a Staffordshire seat I should enter a competition with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). I do not believe that that would be welcomed by anyone here. As one of his neighbours, I should like to pay a tribute to him for his extraordinary stamina in the long hours of the night.

I was, indeed, abed at that time, but I have changed my plans for this evening so that I can vote on the Bill. I feel, therefore, that it is appropriate to say one or two words about why, as someone who is not persuaded by the extreme arguments, I will, nevertheless, vote against the Bill. I rest my case on three or four important propositions.

First, I believe that this is a completely peripheral measure when one considers how many important issues Parliament could have been debating over the past 24 hours. I cannot help but regret infinitely that the Government have repeatedly refused to give us a day to debate the terrible devastation and famine in Africa, and yet have put this measure before us and made us debate it at such great length.

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

It is not my hon. Friends who have made the debate of great length. They have been employing and deploying the best of parliamentary tactics in the best parliamentary tradition. I make no criticism of them. The measure is peripheral, unnecessary and arrogant. I say that with some degree of diffidence because I yield to no one in my respect and admiration of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. I believe him to be a man of broad understanding, genuine compassion and a breadth of vision that is not shared by every member of the Treasury Bench. It therefore grieves me to see him having to pilot through a measure of this type which is so completely un-Tory. The only thing that a Tory should put in his water is whisky.

It is a dangerous little Bill. I hope that we will receive at least one assurance, entirely compatible with the philosophy and tradition of our party, when my hon. Friend replies. That assurance is that there will never be any attempt to move towards the compulsory fluoridation of the water supply.

Mr. John Patten: I can assure my hon. Friend on that point now. It was not my intention to seek to detain the House at all with a further intervention. The Bill's only intention is as was described by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health on Third Reading. The Government have no intention of making fluoridation compulsory nationally.

Mr. Cormack: I am grateful for that assurance as far as it goes, but the Bill creates a precedent upon which, in a democracy, another party could build.

I am persuaded by those of my hon. Friends who have referred to the measure as Socialist. It is. I cannot help but equate it with the attitude of those who after the war did many good things but always believed that they knew what was best for people, whether it was in choosing their accommodation units, as Sir Winston derided them, or in deciding how they should behave in their financial and economic affairs. They knew what was best. The Bill smacks of being in that tradition. I repudiate it for that reason.

I am persuaded by those of my medical and dental friends who tell me that fluoride is good for teeth. I am not persuaded by the extreme arguments of those like my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) who equate fluoride with thalidomide, Debendox and such things. That is nonsense.

People who wish to take fluoride, where it is not present in the water, can do so. The numerous ways they can take it — tablet and toothpaste — have been rehearsed ad infinitum during the debate. Those of us who oppose the measure are saying not that we repudiate the medical arguments, but rather that if we want to take fluoride we can do so without the need for legislation.

I fully sympathise with those of my constituents who say that this measure flies utterly in the face of the free choice which the Conservative party ought always to seek to uphold. It is a thoroughly un-Tory measure.

My final reason for opposing the Bill was touched upon by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) when he spoke of a free vote. There is in the House of Commons a long and honourable tradition of a free vote, but it should be free. A free vote means that every hon. Member has the right to decide, without coercion or persuasion, upon the merits of a measure. This has not been a free vote for many members of the Conservative party in Parliament assembled. I can understand the logic of those who are on the Treasury Bench. I can understand them saying that because the measure is promoted by the Government they wish to stand together, but to extend the tentacles of oppression to the eunuchs on the PPS's Bench is entirely wrong.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Withdraw.

Mr. Cormack: No, I shall not withdraw. It would be wrong of me to talk of individuals, but I know, because I have been told by a number of them, that PPSs have been told that they are jolly well expected to be part of the payroll vote on this matter. The Division lists show that to be the case. That makes nonsense of the statement that this measure is subject to a truly free vote. If the measure were subject to a truly free vote, it would have been rejected outright. I am confident of that, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of that and of the fact that this is a peripheral, unnecessary, interfering and busybody measure. It is a measure which has far more in common with the traditions of Socialism than with the bold freedom to which we seek to aspire. Not for the first time in this Parliament, our hope lies in the Lords.

7.38 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: I speak as one of the Scots who have been contributing to the Bill because, as you realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as we have been told from the Front Bench, its object is to restore the law to what it was thought to be before the Scottish judgment. It seems to be a brand new exercise in the way that matters are dealt with in the House.

You will have some knowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from sitting through many Scottish debates on Scottish legislation, that this must be the first time that we are debating a measure that will affect England and Wales because of a decision in the Scottish courts. As a Scot I look forward to the many other measures that will be introduced because of the wise decisions of Scottish courts. Some of those decisions will be assisted by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), from my neighbouring constituency, who has contributed so much to the debate.

The Government have made it clear by the way in which they have handled the so-called free vote that they are determined to get the Bill through Parliament. I believe that the Bill breaches the principles of individual liberty and that is a mistake. If the Bill passes through the other place unscathed, it will be remembered by the electorate as a Tory Government Bill. I ask my Scottish friends to listen carefully to my speech because there is a good reason why the Scottish courts took the decision which led to the Bill being introduced in its present form. The Scottish people objected to the fluoridation of their water, and the case ended up in court. Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament could end up regretting the fact that the Tory Government put this measure on the statute book.

The Scots, like everyone else, realise that fluoride, as it will be administered under the Bill, is medication forced upon them. They have no option, and it is nonsense for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to suggest that, because this is an enabling measure, somehow the public

will see it as other than a measure imposed by the Conservative Government. There will be no ducking that. The Secretary of State, if no one else, will be blamed for the decisions taken by the non-elected health boards.

I was disappointed to hear the reply of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, because I felt that he did a disservice to those of us who; throughout the long debate, have argued that it is wrong to indulge in compulsory mass medication. We did not spend the night filibustering attempting to do other than drive home to the Government our great fear of the possible result of the legislation. The Bill will be damaging because we are indulging in mass medication. It will be damaging to the Conservative party. It will be as though a nanny state is forcing medication down the throats of children.

The messages from the Opposition, especially the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hurry up."] Is an hon. Member trying to intervene? I have had my back to some of my hon. Friends and did not see any of them stand up. I apologise for the interruption. I thought that I heard a request to make an intervention. I am happy to give way if an hon. Member wishes to intervene. I am being told to wind up. I have been here all night and have made one speech lasting about 10 minutes on a matter about which I care deeply, as do other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and other Opposition Members do a disservice to the working class people in suggesting that they are unable to look after their children. They say that it is therefore essential for this measure as it stands to go on the statute book. The Labour party may live to regret that, and I hope that it does. Obviously, alliance Members have no interest in this subject.

I hope that my hon. Friends who feel as deeply as I do about the principle involved in the legislation will vote against the Bill.

7.45 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: It is a sad day for the House to reach the Third Reading of the Bill. I have not spoken during any of the previous debates. I nevertheless feel that the majority of the people do not want fluoridation by compulsion anywhere. When I participated in the debate on 14 January after being called back from Israel—I acted as a Teller in the Second Reading Division—I was convinced that the debate would continue for many days. It is clear today, with the debate lasting for nearly 24 hours, that there is unrest among Conservative Members. That should not have happened.

It is a tragedy that my hon. Friends, including PPSs and Ministers, are voting not with their conscience but because they feel that they must support the Government's measure. I am not generalising but referring to certain of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The Bill would not receive Third Reading if my right hon. and hon. Friends had a truly free vote.

As one who has been involved in the water industry for a long time—I was involved in energy cost analyses—it seems to me that the water authorities are not exactly enthusiastic about adding fluoride to the water. I am worried about the fact that instructions will come from local health authorities insisting on adding fluoride to the water. That is wrong.

I am not questioning whether fluoride is good for people's teeth. My grandfather was a dentist, my father trained as a dentist, and the husband of the chairman of my local Conservative party is a dentist, so there are already many dentists in my life! It seems clear to me from talking to my father and my chairman's husband that fluoride might be good for teeth. Why should it be compulsory? I suppose that if my grandfather were alive he might have supported fluoridation. All of those three people were or are Conservatives, and I wonder whether they would have supported a measure which I believe is undemocratic.

For a Tory, compulsory medication in any form is the wrong way to proceed. The debate during the past 24 hours or so was entertaining, but deadly serious. I foresee a time when one will have to pay in restaurants for water that does not have fluoride added to it. It is strange that we are moving in that direction.

A recent copy of the magazine "Here's Health" investigated the addition of fluoride to water and said that in many cases it would make teeth brittle. I remain unconvinced, having read that article and an article in *New Society*, that fluoride will cause no danger. As the true democrat that I am, I ask those who believe in freedom of choice: will people stop drinking water when the legislation is passed? They may do so. They will not know whether there is fluoride in the water. Will people move to a different part of the country because a local health authority decides that fluoride must be in the water? Indeed, will it encourage alcoholism because people may go on to alcohol because the water has been doctored?

During the recent campaign I must say in fairness that I have not received many letters against fluoride being added to the water, but I have received some. My good friend, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), has probably received more than all of us. He deserves the congratulations of the House for the way in which he has led, with my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), a great campaign to try to make the Government think again on the principle rather than on whether fluoride is good for people. The questionable benefits should still make people hesitate even at this last minute. We are establishing a precedent. People's lives may be changed. It is a gross encroachment on our civil liberties. I ask for a national referendum. If there had been a national referendum earlier, it is highly unlikely that the Bill would have been brought forward today or any day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying from the Bill. He must discuss what is in the Bill, not what he would like to be in it.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am afraid I have become rather concerned because we are in the last few minutes of the debate. Because of the way we are being rushed, I felt that I had to say something, but I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If the Bill becomes law I can tell the House what the Leicestershire community health council intends to do, according to the *Leicester Mercury* of 23 February. It will mount the biggest ever campaign to ensure that everyone in my county of Leicestershire will have a chance to have a say in the fluoride debate. The Severn-Trent water authority, whose annual report I have, will consider the ballot papers that will go out with the next rate demand to test public opinion throughout the county of Leicestershire. That is to be welcomed. We will find out whether those people want fluoride in the water. It is a pity

[Mr. Bruinvels]

that we do not have the result of that test before the vote tonight. I shall be urging the Severn-Trent water authority to take account of the views.

We are talking about water supplies, and about what the water authority is to do once the Bill becomes law. Under its chairman, John Bellak, the authority will get the views of all its customers. Hopefully the water authority will throw out the fluoridation proposal because of the views of the people of Leicestershire.

We have heard from the Opposition what the working classes want. We are not in a nanny state. We believe in freedom of choice. We believe in people going to the dentist regularly. They can go on doing that. The state should get off our backs. I want to encourage freedom of choice. I do not think the Bill will do that. I want to preserve the freedom of the individual to enable everyone to have his say as to whether he wants fluoride in the water. For that reason, and for no other reason, I shall definitely oppose the Bill.

7.53 pm

Mr. Michael Brown: You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have the ability to speak for an hour and three minutes or for three minutes. I shall try to keep to three minutes.

Before I make my remarks on Third Reading, I think it would be appropriate for me to place on record an apology to a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench for failing to inform them that I intended to refer to letters which they had written some years ago on the issue of fluoridation. I was engaged, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a speech where I was not sure about what I was going to say until I said it. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will accept that there was no malice aforethought. That does not excuse in any way my gross discourtesy to them. I hope they will accept the apology which I have made.

The fact that there has not been a free vote on the Bill is part of the reason why I found myself drawing the attention of the House to the evidence which I had. That would not have been necessary had there been a truly free vote. Therefore, there is a moral. First, a free vote should be a truly free vote, and, secondly, all of us will be careful about what letters we write to our constituents and what early-day motions we shall sign in future.

The Bill is miserable, unnecessary, and deserves utmost opposition by the use of every parliamentary tactic and device at our disposal. I congratulate all those who have participated with me during the past few hours in trying to defeat a measure that is against the spirit of the Conservative Government, against the spirit of the Conservative party, against Conservative philosophy and against the interests of the health of the people. There is doubt about the efficacy of fluoride. So long as there is a doubt, no hon. Member should go into the Division Lobby in support of the Bill. I hope that their Lordships in the other place will do what they are being given a signal to do by my hon. Friends and myself. I hope that they will emasculate the Bill so that we may throw it out when it comes back here.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. John Cope (Treasurer to Her Majesty's Household) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 82.

Division No. 151] **[7.56 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Home Robertson, John
Ancram, Michael	Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Jackson, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Janner, Hon Greville
Barron, Kevin	Jessel, Toby
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	John, Brynmor
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Kennedy, Charles
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Bottomley, Peter	Knox, David
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Lang, Ian
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Bright, Graham	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Lilley, Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Lyell, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair	McCrindle, Robert
Butler, Hon Adam	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Campbell-Savours, Dale	MacGregor, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Maclennan, Robert
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Marland, Paul
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Maude, Hon Francis
Cockeram, Eric	Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Cohen, Harry	Maxton, John
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.	Mellor, David
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Coombs, Simon	Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Cope, John	Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Couchman, James	Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Moynihan, Hon C.
Dewar, Donald	Neale, Gerrard
Dorrell, Stephen	Needham, Richard
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Nelson, Anthony
Dunn, Robert	Neubert, Michael
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.	Newton, Tony
Durant, Tony	Nicholls, Patrick
Dykes, Hugh	O'Neill, Martin
Eastham, Ken	Osborn, Sir John
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Eggar, Tim	Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Fenner, Mrs Peggy	Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Fletcher, Alexander	Pavitt, Laurie
Foster, Derek	Penhaligon, David
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman	Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Fox, Marcus	Raffan, Keith
Freud, Clement	Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Gale, Roger	Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip	Rhodes James, Robert
Goodlad, Alastair	Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Gow, Ian	Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Gower, Sir Raymond	Robertson, George
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*	Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*	Roe, Mrs Marion
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Harris, David	Ryder, Richard
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael	Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Hayhoe, Barney	Scott, Nicholas
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael	Sheerman, Barry

Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilson, Gordon
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Blackburn, John
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irving, Charles
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McGuire, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Murphy, Christopher
Ottaway, Richard
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Proctor, K. Harvey
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thornton, Malcolm
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Keith Best and
Mr. Ivan Lawrence.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

INSURANCE (FEES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 69 (Second Reading Committees), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

WAYS AND MEANS

INSURANCE (FEES)

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Insurance (Fees) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment into the Consolidated Fund of certain fees paid by insurance companies or the Council of Lloyd's.—*[Mr. Alex Fletcher.]*

Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

8.11 pm

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): As this is a consolidation measure, in accordance with normal custom, and with the agreement of the Committee, I will put the clauses en bloc.

Clauses 1 to 35 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 17, leave out lines 36 and 37.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

The Attorney-General: I know that the House has been awaiting this business with ever-increasing impatience for the past 24 hours or so.

The main Companies Bill—a consolidation measure which passed through the House in all its stages last week — did not consolidate Northern Ireland company legislation. The Bill, and especially the provisions to which the amendments relate, was drafted too widely by oversight in that in its unamended form it repeals certain statutory provisions which it is necessary still to preserve in Northern Ireland. The amendments were duly prepared to meet the circumstances in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): If it had been possible to deal with this matter on a point of order or, better still, by an exchange of letters 24 hours ago, I would have readily agreed to that course. I accept what the Attorney-General has said about separate legislation for Northern Ireland, and I endorse the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 18, leave out lines 20 and 21.

No. 3, in page 18, leave out line 26. — *[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Low Pay (Railway Industry)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this H do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

8.14 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I assure the Hous it is as great a pleasure to me as it is to the House to this point in our proceedings. Before proceeding further with my Adjournment debate, I wish to than Government Whip, the hon. Member for Epsom and (Mr. Hamilton), who at 1.30 this morning had the cou to advise me that it would be safe to have a few h sleep.

This morning, or in parliamentary terms tomo morning, the National Union of Railwaymen submit the British Railways Board its pay claim for 1985. claim highlights the problem of low pay in the industry. This is not a new problem for it was iden in 1980 in a report by the Low Pay Unit. That r characterised British Rail as marked by low pay and hours. Since 1980 the situation has become worse an better. Under the Government the pay of railwayme fallen even further behind that of comparable wor When the Minister replies, I hope that he will not say responsibility does not lie with the Government. Government have a clear responsibility for pay w British Rail. In the first instance, the Government d the general financial context within which British reaches its pay settlements. The Government decid lop the public service obligation grant for British Ra £200 million, which is a cut of about 25 per cent. W the Secretary of State for Transport took office it almost his first decision to accelerate the period which the cut was to take place. He brought the time forward from 1988 to 1986. This sharp reduction in p subsidy is the main financial pressure on British Ra has made it much more difficult for BR to pay a l wage to its workers.

Secondly, external financing limits are set by Government and they have become increasingly strin This means that British Rail is obliged to meet more more of its investment from internal sources. In ef British Rail workers are being invited to pay investment in the future of the industry out of their pr wages.

Those are two general observations on Government's overall responsibility towards British I shall go further. The Government have a specific int in and responsibility for the wages that are paid by Br Rail. There are many illustrations to hand to show tha Government have taken a close interest in this matter example, there is the letter of 22 April 1983 to the Br Railways Board about the 1983 rail plan. It was sent the Department of Transport and signed by Mr. Ed Osmotherly. Paragraph 8 of the letter states:

"The pay assumptions"—

these are the assumptions of the rail plan—

"also appear to reflect the concept of a 'going rate' o increase. But recent experience indicates that widely varied of increase apply in different industries according to their a to pay and their recruitment requirements. When the Boa continuing to reduce staff numbers, what is the justificatio large re[illegible] pay increases for the staff who remain".

That passage is important for three reasons. First, clear that the Government are taking a clear and pr interest in rail pay. Secondly, in so far as they are ta

that interest, it appears that they are clearly suggesting that the settlement should be below the going rate, which is an extremely modest rate: Thirdly, and most remarkable of all, Mr. Osmotherly appears to be suggesting that because British Rail requires fewer workers it can afford to pay less than the going rate. I am bound to say that that argument stands on its head the standard argument of British Rail to the NUR, which is that the best way of achieving high pay increases is the achievement of greater productivity, and that the way to achieve that goal is by reducing manpower levels. The Department of Transport appears to be arguing that, because there is a case for less manpower, British Rail should and can pay less than the going rate.

Under this head I throw in finally a reference to the evidence that we received last summer that the Prime Minister had taken a close interest in last year's rail pay settlement and had required her own specific approval and acceptance of the settlement before it could be agreed by British Rail. It is clear that the Government take a view of pay in the rail industry and intervene to fix the annual increase. That makes it legitimate for us to ask the Government whether they are satisfied with the level of pay within British Rail. Are they prepared to defend that level? Before they seek to do so and before I ask them to do so, I shall explain to my hon. Friends, for whose support I am grateful, some of the features of working for British Rail.

One of the most obvious features is that of unsocial hours. Shiftwork is general in the rail industry and its pattern is highly irregular. Drivers find that their shift starting dates vary from week to week and they do not know from one day to the next whether their starting times will be changed. Weekend work is common in an industry in which repairs have to be carried out during off-peak times. Workers on the permanent way have an agreement with British Rail that they will work 40 weekends out of 60. That agreement must be far more demanding than any other within British industry. Leave entitlement is beggarly. Only 4 per cent. of manual workers in Britain have an annual leave entitlement of less than four weeks. That amounts to one in 25 workers. Among the 4 per cent. are all the rail workers employed by British Rail.

Finally, the work is dangerous. Danger has always been incidental to railway movements. Every year there are about 30 fatalities within the British Rail system. In addition to what might be described as the standard danger — the expectation of accidents in the course of movements — there has recently been a growing and more distressing danger to rail staff from assaults on them by passengers and other members of the public. Over the past 10 years indictable offences within the rail system have more than doubled. In 1983 British Transport police reported 2,000 incidents of public disorder in the railway network.

What is the reward that workers operating in these difficult circumstances receive? To measure the reward, let us examine what the Government recognise as the poverty level. It is not difficult to do so because the Government, by their nature, are obliged to publish some figures as reference marks for their own benefit.

Currently, a family with two children qualifies for family income supplement if it has a wage of £100 or less. It also qualifies for a unified housing benefit if it has a wage of £101 or less. We can see from these examples that the Government accept the figure of about £100 per week as the poverty level. It is a low pay level which is also officially recognised by the Trades Union Congress which sets it at £104 per week.

By comparison with these figures, I can advise the House that the basic pay in the rail industry is £76·25, a level so patently inadequate that it is necessary for the British Railways Board to introduce a minimum earnings level, which currently stands at £89 per week. The very existence of this guaranteed minimum earnings level is an admission that the basic pay rate is not enough to live on.

Over recent years both these levels have tended to worsen. The basic rate of pay has lost one tenth of its purchasing power since 1975. In 1975, the basic pay of a railman was £4 behind that of a postman. A railman is now £20 worse off than a postman every week.

Ironically, when the railway industry first began, the main source of labour in the rail industry came from the land, as agricultural labourers left farming and went into the rail network, which was then spreading across the countryside. In the past two years, for the first time in history the basic rate of railmen has fallen below the basic rate paid to agricultural labourers.

How then do the workers in this industry make ends meet? They do it by a perfectly simple device. They work long hours to make up short wages. The other side of the coin of working in the industry with the lowest pay is that they put in the longest hours — hours which may be shorter than those worked by Members of the House in circumstances such as we saw last night, but for rewards very much more modest than those received by any Member of the House.

Average hours worked in the rail industry last year were 51 hours per week. Railmen make ends meet by working a six-day week. As hon. Members will have noticed, that is an average figure. It is in the nature of averages that not everybody gets the average amount of overtime. There is no guarantee that workers will get that level of overtime. Those who do not have to live on a pittance. Those who do have to work what by any definition would be unreasonable amounts of time.

In the British Rail census of employment of 1984, we find that in any one week in 1984, 10,500 staff of BR worked over 60 hours. Of that number, 3,000 worked over 70 hours and 700 worked over 80 hours, a figure that can be found in any week of last year. This level is frequently described as excessive. I would not use that term. I would describe it as forced overtime; it is overtime that it is necessary for men to work in order to take home earnings on which they can survive.

It is a matter of regret that to this day British Rail prefers to look for shedding of jobs rather than seeking to cut back on overtime in order to pay its men an adequate basic rate of pay that would remove the need for such overtime to sustain earnings.

Let me give the House a couple of examples which illustrate the points that I have been making. These are not cardboard cutouts invented by me, but examples of real cases operating in the rail industry based on wage slips that have been sent to me. First, I give the House the case of a chargeman working from Norwich. Chargeman is a responsible post. He is essentially a foreman in the industry: he has people below him who work to him. The chargeman in question on his wage slip had no overtime in the week for which I received the wage slip. The gross pay that he received that week was £99·55. The net pay he received was £77. This is a man with responsibility,

[Mr. Robin Cook]

fulfilling a junior managerial role — a man who, incidentally, joined the rail industry in 1940 and has given it over 40 years' loyal service, in return for which he is left with £77 per week. That is a case in which there was no overtime.

I now share with the House a case in which a man on a lower basic rate was obliged to work overtime in order to earn the income at which he and his family could subsist. He is a railman at Watford. He worked 12 hours overtime plus eight hours on Sunday. In other words, he worked 20 hours over and above the basic minimum of 39 hours, that is, a 59-hour week. What did he receive for 59 hours' work? It was broadly half as much again as the average in British industry. He received a gross pay, even with 20 hours' overtime, of £146 which left him, after deductions, with £106 net. This is a young man with two young children and a family to support on that wage, with which he is left after working excessive hours, including all Sundays. I do not think that any hon. Member could reasonably say that that represents a fair reward for working half as long again as the average manual worker in British industry.

There are few women employed in British Rail. About 5 per cent. of the work force are female. In passing, I will say that, as always, it is the women we find at the bottom of the pile; it is the women in industry who have to do the most menial jobs and who in turn receive the most miserable rates of pay, even lower than the examples that I have shared with the House.

Let me sum up my argument. Employees of British Rail have difficult working conditions of a kind which I suspect many Members of the House would not tolerate. They work excessive hours. At the end of those long hours in difficult conditions, they are left with poverty wages. Moreover, the poverty of those wages is worsening as they are left further behind other groups in society and as the purchasing power of their wages declines. Ministers cannot escape their share of the responsibility for this situation arising; nor should they seek to evade their responsibility for remedying it.

I end by referring to the current promotional programme of British Rail, which lays great stress on public relations. Many members of British Rail who come into contact with the public have been fed through a charm school as part of this promotional exercise, no doubt in order to be better able to explain to the members of the public why, as a result of Government cuts, the service has been reduced. Emphasis in the promotional exercise has been placed on the role of guards in particular. The basic pay for guards in British Rail is £6·30 less than that of a labourer in the Rover factories. Those labourers have no contact with the public. I suspect that the management of Rover would be aghast if it were suggested that people on that level of remuneration should be expected to support the public relations profile of their company.

Stress is currently being placed by British Rail on customer care. I am glad that it has mounted a promotional exercise, but if the Government and the British Railways Board want that exercise and that promotional campaign to be taken seriously, they may wish to reflect that customers may find it difficult to be convinced that they will be taken great care of by British Rail when it so conspicuously fails to take care of its own employees.

8.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State f Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It is normally practice for the Minister replying to the debate congratulate the hon. Member who has initiated it on bei selected in the ballot. I shall not depart from that tim honoured practice and I do, indeed, congratulate the ho Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). However, as the ho Gentleman knows very well—since he is sponsored the National Union of Railwaymen—this very day, t British Railways Board will have heard, in formal sessio the pay claim for the year ahead submitted by the NU the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers a Firemen and by the Transport Salaried Staffs Associatio The hon. Gentleman also knows very well that p negotiations are always delicate and sensitive matters a that there is nothing which we in this place could or shou say or do which could in any way prejudice tho discussions. The rest of my remarks will respect th principle.

It seems to me that there are two ways in which p negotiations can be conducted. They can take place with the straitjacket of rigid pay policies, such as tho deployed by the last Labour Administration — with the inequalities, anomalies and confusions which th engender — or they can take place, as they shoul between employer and employee directly. This absolutely fundamental. The hon. Member for Livingst knows enough about business to understand that it must for individual managements to judge the correct level remuneration for their employees. They must make tho judgments against the background of a wide range factors; such as what can be afforded, what rates of p are needed to retain existing staff in employment, wh wages are needed to recruit new entrants where they a required, and the trade-off between expenditure a charges for goods and services. It is against th background of precisely those sorts of factors that Briti Rail will now have to judge the rates of pay which shou be applicable in its industry. It will have to make th judgments, it will have to conduct the negotiations and will have the responsibility, in consultation with the r unions, for whatever settlement emerges. That is the w in which pay matters should be handled and that is the w in which they have been handled since the Governme took office. It is not the role of the Government, or anybody else outside the railway industry for that matte to decide what pay rates the industry can or cannot affor

The simple fact of the matter is that BR can pay out staff wages only what it can afford. If BR is to pay high wages, it must increase the amount of money it can mal available for its paybill. Now how could it do that? The are two ways, really. It could reduce unit costs or it cou increase revenue. BR has, in fact, made considerab efforts to reduce unit costs. In that, it has always consult the unions. In particular, it has sought the co-operation the NUR and ASLEF in a number of measures designe to improve operating efficiency. It has even offer "specific rewards" in the form of supplementary paymen to the unions in exchange for these measures. Bu notwithstanding all this, the NUR and ASLEF seem have an extraordinary blind spot and have tried to obstru BR at nearly every turn. For example, in 1983 the NU put a block on productivity talks which remains to this ve day. There are those who would say that if pay rates in th

railway industry are low—and that is always a judgment of relativities — the unions should stop blocking the management's attempts to make the money needed to pay higher wages.

What of the other means by which the railways could increase their resources, such as by increasing their revenue? BR is of course trying to do just that. But there is a limit, as in all other cases, to what the market will bear. Would the hon. Gentleman like to see BR charging its customers more? Is he suggesting that passenger fares should be increased by more than is strictly necessary, so that passengers decide that rail services are simply uncompetitive when compared with, say, coaches, or motor cars, or with any other sector of the transport market in which British Rail has to compete? If he is suggesting that, the ultimate effect, as the hon. Gentleman knows, would be to reduce the attractiveness of the railways. There would be fewer passengers, and fewer manufacturers and distributors using railway freight services to carry their goods; revenue would fall, and so charges would have to rise to cover the shortfall—and so on. It is an upward spiral. The net effect would be to damage the future of the railways and, implicitly, to reduce employment prospects. Is that what the hon. Gentleman proposes—to diminish job opportunities? I doubt it. I know that some Opposition Members would disagree with that analysis. They would claim, as does the NUR, that the way to increase revenue is to reduce fares. But all the evidence points to the opposite. The hon. Gentleman will probably be aware that BR has, in fact, considered whether a substantial across-the-board reduction in rail fares would encourage more users and increase revenue. As a result of careful analysis the board concluded that it could not attract sufficient extra custom to compensate for the reduction in revenue received from its existing passengers. The problem is that one cannot have reduced fares only for additional passengers. One must reduce the revenue from existing passengers. That would not improve the board's overall financial position. I know that arguments for fares cuts are in the main well meant. The trouble is that they simply do not hold water.

As I have already made clear, I do not propose to say anything today that could prejudice the formal railway pay talks that have just started. However, I should say something about the board's financial position.

Mr. Cook: I am most grateful to the Minister for that last reference. I intended to draw his attention to the fact that the options that he outlined curiously overlooked the other option, which would be for the Government not to require British Rail to have the reduced subsidy that the Government are offering to it. Will the Minister acknowledge that it will be much more difficult for British Rail to respond to the problem of low wages in industry if at the same time it loses a quarter of its public support?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows that the objectives that were set for the British Railways Board and accepted by it were based on the board's plans. The board simply brought forward the timing of the delivery of those plans in terms of a reduction of the PSO grant. My point is that the railway industry has it within its own gift to achieve the additional resources required to pay higher wages by improving productivity and seeking to improve revenue. I have demonstrated that, most regrettably, the unions have not sought to help the board to increase its income and to reduce its costs by increased productivity. If they did that, they would create the extra money which would then be available to help to increase pay in the industry.

That is the nub of the problem. BR's task has been made no easier, indeed quite the opposite, by the effects of the miners' strike. BR would normally have carried about 90 million tonnes of coal during the past year. The effect of the miners' strike has been to reduce revenue by about £240 million. Of that, a substantial sum—more than £60 million—is a direct result of ASLEF and the NUR insisting that their members black coal traffic. Many people in the House and elsewhere would argue that the NUR and ASLEF have a considerable nerve in putting to the board a claim for substantial increases in pay now, while during the past year they have cost the railways so dear. By my calculations, the money that BR has lost because of the blacking action called for by those unions is equivalent to a general pay increase of 3·5 per cent. Instead of getting extra resources into the railways to enable extra pay to be achieved, the unions chose to cost the railways lost revenue which is equivalent to a 3·5 per cent. pay increase in the industry. If the NUR and ASLEF truly believe that their members are underpaid, they should have told them to do everything possible to improve customer confidence in the railways, and to show that the railway unions can work together with BR management to promote an efficient railway industry. I hope that as the miners' strike is finished and as coal traffic is returning to normal the rail unions will seek to join with BR management to repair the damage done to the railway's revenue and resources.

Let us make no mistake about where the money comes from to pay for wage increases. It comes from the till, the receipts, customers' payments and efficiency. It comes from reliability and a spirit of co-operation. It does not come from political gestures made under the banner of trade union solidarity. I sincerely hope that the leaders of the NUR and ASLEF will have borne that in mind when they sat with the Railways Board this morning.

The only sensible way to secure increases in rail earnings is through improved economic performance. Unrealistic pay settlements increase employers' costs and put jobs at risk. The responsibility of trade union leaders is clear. Moderate union pay claims help to preserve the jobs of their members and may also lead to the reduction in unemployment which we all wish to see.

As with virtually every other industry, some people are paid more than others in the railway industry. That is understandable and reasonable. Different skills demand different earnings. The differential pay structure in British Rail means that, according to figures that I have from the board, signalmen on the top of the scale earn an average of about £246 a week—almost double the average gross earnings of the lowest paid member of BR staff. As the pool of money that BR has available for staff remuneration is limited, perhaps the hon. Gentleman thinks that the more highly paid members of BR staff would be willing to forgo some of their pay to ensure that additional money goes to those to whom he referred as low paid. I doubt whether that is what he has in mind.

Mr. Cook: I assure the Minister that he is wrong. At no point did I argue that someone in British Rail is paid

[Mr. Cook]

too much. The technicians to whom he referred are highly trained and BR is in the same market as British Telecom and has to pay that rate.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman ought not to overlook the fact that, if there are given resources available for increasing pay, they must be shared between the highly paid and the low paid and as he is not suggesting an alteration in the mix he must concentrate on how the earnings of BR can be increased. That is not achieved by losing customer confidence and driving them away through strike action and refusing to carry their goods. The unfortunate legacy of actions in the industry has resulted in it losing trade. We beg that it will come back. A potential £60 million equivalent to a 3·5 per cent. pay increase has been lost through union action.

The hon. Gentleman has expressed an obviously genuine concern for the lower paid grades in the railway industry. He and I would like to see railwaymen getting more pay, and I can understand his point of view, but where is the money to come from? I have already demonstrated that BR cannot generate more for itself than what the market will allow. So is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the taxpayer should provide more and that we do not give BR sufficient financial support through the public service obligation grant? I reject utterly the notion of increasing the PSO grant. I say that not because the Government are mean, or because I want to do the railways down — quite the opposite. I want to see a flourishing, vigorous railway industry competing fully in the transport market, and so does the B That is why it has embraced the objective of redu PSO grant from just about £1 billion now to £63 in 1983 prices by 1986. The board's acceptanc objective is a statement of faith in the futur railways. It judges that it can reach it through efficiency and reliability, without having to embar major programme of closures. Does the hon. G agree that a more efficient and more reliable ra worth striving for? I hope that he does.

The simple truth is that the future of the railw thus the remuneration of railwaymen, is in the ir own hands. The Government do not seek to m matters of pay. Of course, the Government must interest. With the public purse contributing so h the railways, and with manpower costs being by largest single item of BR expenditure, it is only proper that the Government should have regard to of employing the work force. That is reasona necessary. The taxpayer—who contributes so s ally to the running of the railways — would justified in accusing Ministers of fiscal negligenc did not take such an interest, but taking a res interest is hardly the same as interfering——

The Question having been proposed after Ten on Tuesday and the debate having continued for hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes to Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 March 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Order. As all the private Bills have blocking motions, I shall, with the leave of the House, deal with them in a single group.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

HARROGATE STRAY BILL *(By Order)*

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL *(By Order)*

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

STREATHAM PARK CEMETERY BILL *(By Order)*

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 14 March.

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Lerwick Harbour; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday 13 March and to be printed. [Bill 97.]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Room Heaters

1. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if his Department has made any assessment of the effects of solid fuel room heaters, installed by the Housing Executive, on the health of the elderly.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): No, Sir. However, I understand the Housing Executive continuously reviews the suitability and effectiveness of room heaters in all its properties.

Mr. Walker: Is the Minister aware that the frail and elderly are having great difficulty coping with the intricacies of this form of central heating? Does he know that injuries have been sustained when people have tried to remove the ashcan and the throat plate? Will he consider making provision for some form of ash carrier to help overcome the problem?

Mr. Patten: I shall consider the matter of the ash carrier with the Housing Executive. There is no risk whatever with these heaters when they are properly used. We must see that they are properly used, for example by publicity, by regular visits, through the coal advisory service and the Housing Executive, and by regular servicing.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Is the Under-Secretary aware that there is even greater concern among the elderly in that those who want their gas heating changed to solid fuel find that, because the Government have been dragging their feet over what is to happen with gas in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive is unable to take a decision in the matter? When is that matter likely to be resolved?

Mr. Patten: There has been no dragging of feet. We are spending more in Northern Ireland on this aspect than has ever been spent before, and I hope that the Housing Executive will be able to continue with a full programme.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Will the hon. Gentleman make sure that when the Housing Executive reports to the National Coal Board about a fire which is in need of repair, the Housing Executive follows up the matter to make sure that the repair is done, so treating a little better those who have been without a fire for perhaps several days because of lack of repair?

Mr. Patten: I shall see that that point is drawn to the attention of the Housing Executive.

Driving Licence

2. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans to make any changes in the format of the new 10-year driving licence in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes, Sir. Some changes to the existing format will be made to meet the requirements of the European Community model licence, which the United Kingdom is committed to introduce from 1 January 1986.

Mr. Ross: I am surprised to hear that reason being given for the changes that are necessary. Why has the Northern Ireland licence been introduced from 1 January this year when it will last for only one year and be superseded by the European licence? Why not wait until next year? Will the hon. Gentleman explain why the new one is in the form of a three-part licence rather than the booklet that we had previously? Could not all the information have been put on one plastic card which could have been made small enough to fit in with all the credit cards that one carries nowadays, rather than the back of the new licence being used as an advertisement for the DOE?

Mr. Patten: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is that it was introduced because the Public Accounts Committee suggested that we should get ahead, and it is always right to take the advice of that Committee—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should have said that it is invariably right to take the advice of that Committee. The hon. Gentleman was wrong in the second part of his supplementary question, because the new licence is in two, not three, parts. One part is in plastic so that a photograph can go on it and be secure. The other part could not be in plastic because too much information needed to be carried on it.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: When did the House approve this EEC decision?

Mr. Patten: The House will doubtless be discussing the EEC decision—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—which goes back to 1980. I am sure that there have been a number of occasions since then when the House has been able to consider the point.

Farm Wardens

3. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many farm wardens would need to be appointed in Northern Ireland during a period of tension to meet his Ministry's food control plans.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): Approximately 860.

Mr. Bowden: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient instructors are available to teach farm wardens and that sufficient time will be available between the appointment of farm wardens and a period of tension to ensure that they receive appropriate training and instruction?

Dr. Boyson: Most of the farm wardens will be appointed from within agriculture in Northern Ireland. All the appointments should be identified within the next six months. Since they are all involved in agriculture already, training will take no more than one day.

Security

4. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security.

12. **Mr. Molyneaux** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

18. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Since I last answered questions in the House on 7 February, 11 police officers, one member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, one member of the prison service and seven civilians have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. As the House will know from my statement on Monday 4 March, the incident which claimed the most lives was that on 28 February when the Provisional IRA killed nine police officers at Newry police station—an atrocity which rightly brought widespread condemnation. I know that the House will wish again to join me in extending sympathy to all who were bereaved by terrorist action during this period.

Notwithstanding this tragic loss of life, the security forces have continued their determined efforts to defeat terrorism and to uphold the rule of law. Since the beginning of this year a total of 83 people have been charged with serious offences, including four with murder and seven with attempted murder; and 40 weapons, 1,768 rounds of ammunition and 2 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend might not wish to answer too directly, but does he accept that the overwhelming majority of people in this country, albeit some reluctantly, accept that it would be unreasonable for our security forces, when confronted by armed men apparently bent on violence, to wait until their lives were put at risk and they were fired on before they defended themselves?

Mr. Hurd: Such judgments usually have to be made on the spur of the moment. They are bound to be difficult judgments. One cannot generalise sensibly in advance. All I can say is that the test which the courts would apply afterwards, if necessary, would be whether the degree of force used was reasonable in all the circumstances of the case.

Mr. Molyneaux: In addition to countering the IRA's shoot-to-kill campaign against Roman Catholics, will the Secretary of State do all in his power to reduce the flow of explosives across the United Kingdom frontier with the Irish Republic?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is on to an important point which is much in my mind. Home-made explosives did the damage at Newry on Thursday night. The explosives were made out of ammonium nitrate, a common farm fertiliser. The problem of fertilisers being converted to home-made explosives exists in the North and in the South. It is logical that the two Governments should work together on that problem.

Mr. Proctor: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the growing trend in the IRA to shoot Catholics in the security forces, such as the RUC and, in particular, the prison service? Will my right hon. Friend comment on the motives for such deeds?

Mr. Hurd: That is an important matter. Four of the 17 RUC officers killed in the last year are believed to have been Catholics. Two of them were killed at Newry on Thursday night. A Roman Catholic prison officer was also killed recently outside the cathedral at Armagh. It is too early to be certain, but there might be a singling out by the terrorists designed to intimidate members of the minority community who serve with courage and steadfastness

alongside colleagues with similar qualities from the majority community. If that is so, I believe that the campaign will fail.

Mr. Nicholson: On Monday afternoon the Secretary of State made a statement to the House in which he announced that large sums of money are to be made available for the provision of better security at border police stations. May I draw to his attention the fact that many of us are aware that the proposals for a new police station in Newry are not new, but have been on the books for many years? Will he assure the House that there will be no more shilly-shallying or dilly-dallying, that the decision will be made, come what may, and that the badly needed station will be provided almost immediately? Will he further assure us that he will not allow those who may try to object to the building of the police station to stand in his way?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there has been a long delay in the planning procedures for this particular project. I understand that the procedures have now been completed and that the project will proceed. Certainly it has the highest priority.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman inform the House at what time before the carnage in Newry a foot patrol of the RUC did surveillance duty around the police station? Will he assure the House that the members of the RUC who are now on duty at vulnerable border police stations and who are living in portakabins will be safeguarded immediately, and that proper housing accommodation will be put in place for them?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, I am informed that protection is given to the Newry police station by patrolling at all times, and that the responsible patrol was inspected by the divisional commander late on the afternoon of Thursday 28 February. There was never any question of withdrawing protection from any vulnerable base or station. On the second point, we have a massive police buildings programme, which includes 20 major building projects over the next five years and the one at Newry, which the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) mentioned. From his knowledge of these matters, the hon. Gentleman will realise that a portakabin is not necessarily more vulnerable than a conventional building, because of the effect of blast and falling masonry. However, he is correct to say that we must provide the best possible technical protection in both the design of new stations and the protection of existing stations, including those in the border area. That is being given the highest priority.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends made some serious criticisms and gave serious advice in their discussions in the Assembly at Stormont on Monday afternoon. If he or his hon. Friends would like to come and go over that ground with me, I shall be extremely pleased.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government are aware that international terrorist activities are being financed by insurance companies in the City of London? Will he further confirm that the Government are aware that those insurance companies that provide policies for the payment of ransom against kidnap are providing positive encouragement to kidnapping and other such terrorist activities? Will he confirm that the Government are aware that the leading insurance company in the City of London has already admitted to paying such ransoms, and will he tell us why the Government have so far refused to make such activities illegal?

Mr. Hurd: I am certainly aware that such policies exist and have existed for some time. The hon. Gentleman is correct about that. I have heard arguments both against and in favour of allowing such policies to continue. That is one of the matters that we are now considering.

Mr. Benyon: Further to the important question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), is my right hon. Friend aware that ordinary people cannot understand why the security forces cannot open fire on people carrying offensive weapons? Is it not time to revise the yellow card?

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe, on the evidence available to me, that the existing rules act as an inhibition on the legitimate right of our security forces to protect themselves. It is important that they should operate under the rule of law. If my hon. Friend has a suggestion or proposal to make in that regard, he should let me know about it.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the Secretary of State aware that some Labour Members, who are destructively critical of his efforts and those of the security forces to protect the law-abiding people of Ulster, have been notably absent both for his statement on Monday afternoon and at Question Time today, when it was obvious that the slaughter of innocent members of the security forces would be raised? What is his interpretation of that?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is reopening a matter which had I hoped had been closed. I would simply repeat my view, which I believe is incontestable, that this Parliament is responsible for security in Northern Ireland as in other parts of the United Kingdom, and it is this House to which I must report and am accountable.

Mr. Stanbrook: Has it not always been the clear law of this country that soldiers need not wait to be fired upon before they fire in order to avoid being killed?

Mr. Hurd: I have stated the law, and that is the position under the law as it stands. It is a reasonable position, which is understood by the security forces and in which they are thoroughly and professionally trained.

Mr. Archer: Since we all wish the police to operate as effectively and as safely as possible, and since almost everyone, including the Police Federation, is urging the Secretary of State to restructure the police authority and reform the police complaints procedure, will he tell the House whether he proposes to publish a consultation document, and if so, when?

Mr. Hurd: The term of office of the present police authority expires at the end of June this year, and I am considering what proposals to make in that regard. It is unfortunately true that some places on the authority are unfilled as a result of decisions taken by the local authorities controlled by the Social Democratic and Labour party, and by the trade union movement. I hope that we can resolve the matter.

As to the police complaints proposals, which are a separate matter, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is

right. I hope that soon I can let him and all the parties interested in this matter have our proposals, which I hope he will find far-reaching and important.

Unemployment

5. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make an up-to-date statement on the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Figures released today in respect of 14 February show there were 122,957 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland. The unemployment rate was 21·2 per cent. This represents a slight decrease on the January figure. Employment has stabilised during the past year, and indeed in the past six months of 1984 there has been an increase of more than 4,160 in the numbers in work. Manufacturing output has increased by 3 per cent. in the past 12 months, compared with the previous year.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that until and unless unemployment is significantly reduced a political settlement will be extremely difficult to achieve? Does he agree that one of the best ways to reduce unemployment is through the small firms sector, and what is he doing to encourage small firms in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: I agree with my hon. Friend that the lower the rate of unemployment, the less likelihood there is of people standing at street corners who can be recruited into paramilitary organisations. I agree with my hon. Friend also that unemployment can be reduced by the expansion of small businesses and by outside firms coming into the Province. LEDU, the Government organisation for helping small firms, helped 906 companies to establish themselves last year, which created 3,721 jobs. Indeed, we announced two months ago that we would pay between 50 and 75 per cent. of the cost to small firms of calling in auditors, computer experts or other consultants to help them to expand. The number of small firms applying for establishment grants in Northern Ireland is three times higher than it was three years ago.

Mr. William Ross: We are grateful for the work that was done that led to the founding of the Maydown Precision Engineering works outside Londonderry, and we were very glad to hear the Minister say that he looks to small businesses to provide many jobs in Northern Ireland, but will he assure the other subcontracting and jobbing engineering firms in Northern Ireland some of which are very small, that they are eligible for exactly the same kind of financial help as was given to Maydown Precision Engineering? Will he assure such small firms in the Londonderry area and in my constituency that they will not find that they are undercut by the financial assistance that was given to that firm?

Dr. Boyson: If one adds up the amount of financial assistance that we are giving to industry every year, one sees that the amount of money going to Maydown Precision Engineering is well below 1 per cent., so the other 99 per cent. will be spent around the Province. Maydown precision engineering is a new organisation. Any new organisation anywhere in the Province which believes it can bring in private capital, and its own capital and which needs help in starting up, can approach LEDU and the IDB. As I have already mentioned, last year we assisted nearly 1,000 firms to establish themselves by means of Government money.

Rev. William McCrea: In view of the disastrous unemployment figures in my constituency of Mid-Ulster, which has the worst unemployment figures in Europe, will the Minister say how many times he or his Department has been in contact with the Cookstown clothing firm which has given closure notice to its employees? Has his Department made funds available to that firm in order to encourage it to change its mind, or have other firms been approached to take over this business?

Dr. Boyson: The IDB, like LEDU, is in continual contact with hundreds of firms inside the Province. I am not certain about the developments during the last week concerning the Cookstown firm. I know that they have been in contact. I shall send a letter to the hon. Gentleman giving details of exactly what has happened during recent weeks.

Mr. Hume: Will the Minister investigate why 20 per cent. of the cuts in the youth training programme are in the constituency of Foyle, which includes both Strabane and Derry, two areas with the highest unemployment figures in these islands? I express my appreciation, which is shared by the entire community in Derry, not only for the concern that the Minister has shown about the closure of a major engineering works in the north-west, but for the positive action that he has taken to save those jobs.

Dr. Boyson: I appreciate, as, I am sure, does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the hon. Members's comments. As to the various community groups and other groups that are taking part in youth training, at the end of last year there was a surplus of places which had not been taken up. An analysis was made throughout the Province of how one could bring into relationship the number of places available on the one side and the number of people making applications on the other. About 80 per cent. of 16-year-olds are now on one form of course or another. About 56 per cent. of those who are on training courses obtain jobs when they leave. Therefore, such training courses in the Province are very helpful. I shall look into the details that apply to the hon. Gentleman's constituency and contact him.

Mr. Bell: While the decrease which the Minister has mentioned in the number of unemployed is welcome to the House, does he not agree that there are certain black spots in Northern Ireland which continue to cause concern? I am thinking of Strabane, Cookstown, Newry and Greater Belfast. The most up-to-date figures that are available to me show that 4,035 are out of work in Strabane, 2,661 in Cookstown, 7,996 in Newry and 61,005 in Greater Belfast. Although the Minister has referred to an increase of 4,160 in those at work, does he agree that that is mostly part-time rather than full-time work? Would it not be better if the Government pursued a policy of job creation which would result in people working full-time rather than part-time?

Dr. Boyson: We should obviously be delighted if a higher take-up of full-tme jobs in the Province could be achieved, but if it is a choice between no employment and part-time employment we take what we can get. One trusts that those firms which take on part-timers will find that the employees are so good and and that the firms' profits have so increased that their part-timers become full-timers in two or three years' time.

The atmosphere in the Province is better. It is by no means ideal. There are pockets of high unemployment in

Strabane, Cookstown and other places. Indeed, they are some of the highest unemployment areas in the whole of Europe. Special measures must be taken in such cases. The February survey showed that employers throughout the Province intended to employ 2 per cent. more in a year's time than now and to invest 17 per cent. more this year than last. It is by further investment and taking on more workers that the unemployment problem will be solved.

Short Bros. Ltd.

6. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he proposes to fill the current spare capacity for the manufacture of aircraft at Short Bros. Ltd.; what recent guidelines he has issued to the management of Short Bros. in this regard; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Due to the success of Shorts over the past few years in winning contracts, I am pleased to assure the House, on the advice of Shorts itself, that there is no undue spare capacity for the manufacture of aircraft. I trust that the winning of new contracts will ensure that this happy state continues. I have not issued any recent guidelines to the management of Short Bros. in this regard and I see no reason to make a statement.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister join my right hon. and hon. Friends and, I am sure, the entire House in congratulating Shorts on its successful efforts in filling spare capacity? I have in mind especially the multi-million dollar order from Boeing, following so recently on the sale of eight Short 360s to China.

Dr. Boyson: I am delighted to agree with the hon. Gentleman. Shorts announced yesterday, or the day before, that it is making the rudders for the Boeing 737-300. This will provide 100-150 jobs during 1986-89 at the Shorts works.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Minister agree that it would be sad if Shorts showed a capability for winning orders from foreigners throughout the world but could not convince companies in the United Kingdom to buy from it? Will he do whatever he can to persuade the Ministry of Defence to order the Short Tucano?

Dr. Boyson: I am sure that the sentiments of the hon. Gentleman will be echoed throughout the Province. Everyone involved in the Province hopes that the trainer aircraft contract will be considered seriously and that the contract will go to Shorts.

Mr. Bell: Irrespective of the guidelines which the Minister is issuing or not issuing, will he tell the House what guidelines he proposes to issue to the Shorts management on the statement made by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on Monday that external borrowing limits will be reduced for nationalised industries from £3·1 billion in 1984-85 to minus £110 million in the financial year 1987-88? Last year the Secretary of State wisely allowed Shorts' EFL to rise from £78 million to £79 million. Will the Minister tell the House that he will use his best endeavours to spare Shorts from the Chief Secretary's axe?

Dr. Boyson: There is an established procedure by which I see the chairman of Shorts every three months. I saw him last weekend at an informal meeting. Should any problems occur, I will be contacted by the chairman. I shall certainly meet him and we shall consider fully any problems that have arisen. The continuance of Shorts, with the success that it has been having over the past few years, has done much to raise confidence throughout the Province.

Mr. John Browne: I support my hon. Friend's words of congratulation for Shorts. Will he confirm that in future contracts, especially with the Ministry of Defence, the company bids competitively with other British companies and not on a favoured basis?

Dr. Boyson: I am sure that the Ministry of Defence will ensure that there are comparable contracts for all, which can be obtained on a competitive basis, with all companies knowing what they are bidding for. Shorts has an advantage in that previously it has had no military aircraft orders from the United Kingdom and there have been years when few civil aircraft have been ordered, because of the recession. This means that the company now has the advantage of being able to offer continuity of labour and production in seeking the trainer contract.

Footpaths

8. **Mr. J. Enoch Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will allocate specific duties to district councils in respect of gritting and clearing footpaths.

Mr. Chris Patten: Agency arrangements already exist which permit district councils at their discretion to grit footpaths in specified urban areas throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Powell: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the intense public preoccupation with measures to cope with frost and snow in the Province? Will he, pending the restoration of genuine local government to look after these matters in a commonsense way, bring local authorities as far as possible into co-operation with his Department in these measures?

Mr. Patten: As the right hon. Gentleman may know, last winter we produced a model agreement for agency arrangements in consultation with local government. I am bound to say that this has received a mixed reaction, partly, I suspect, because many district councils think that praise and popularity are not always heaped on the shoulders of those who undertake this important function.

Political Talks

9. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement concerning dialogue between political parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: The need for serious discussion among the parties opposed to violence about practical ways of creating political stability in Northern Ireland is compelling. I shall continue to try to stimulate such discussion, taking a more active part myself if and when this seems sensible. Northern Ireland cannot in my view return to political normality unless those elected representatives who believe in the strength of democracy are willing to meet and work together.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Will he confirm that, alongside a vigorous

security policy in Northern Ireland, the Government will take every opportunity to encourage political initiatives in the Province as part of the path towards political stability?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is correct. I have been trying to do that. There have been various road blocks along the way, and I shall continue to try to remove them.

Mr. Rowe: In the light of President Gaddafi's recent statement, will my right hon. Friend comment on the difficulties caused to such a dialogue by interventions from outside by people as irresponsible as the President of Libya?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is correct. We have left the Libyan authorities in no doubt that any type of interference by them in the affairs of Northern Ireland will be incompatible with progress towards a better relationship.

Mr. Archer: Is it proposed to arrange a further summit meeting in the near future, or are the Government now persuaded that long, detailed and undramatic discussions are more likely to bring progress than short, exciting ones? Further, is not a discussion more likely to produce a consensus in the absence of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Hurd: I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is leaping ahead a bit on the Order Paper, since this question refers to political parties. Following the right hon. and learned Gentleman in that leap, I must say that we have not yet begun to discuss with the Irish Government the date for the next summit.

Co-ownership Housing Schemes

10. **Mr. Beggs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will reconsider the present financial limits which apply to co-ownership housing schemes with a view to increasing funds available for the first home purchase under the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Proposals have been made for increases in the purchase price and income limits, but I wish to review the scheme as a whole rather than consider these in isolation. The Government, however, remain fully committed to the co-ownership scheme in Northern Ireland and I am pleased to say that the high level of applications is being maintained.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that response. Will he consider how the co-ownership scheme could be applied to self-help schemes in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Patten: I know how much interest the hon. Gentleman has taken in this subject and how much he has lobbied us about it. I can assure him that that proposal will be considered by the review, which I hope will have reported by the end of the summer.

Bank Deposits

11. **Mr. McCusker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to require banks, on his instructions, to deposit with the High Court moneys which are suspected either of belonging to illegal organisations or of being destined for use in furtherance of terrorist activities, such moneys to remain on deposit for a specified period during which the custodian of the funds may seek to prove that they are for lawful purposes.

Mr. Hurd: We are examining our existing powers. The Government would not hesitate to take all appropriate steps if it were clear that a proscribed organisation's funds were lodged in a bank in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McCusker: Does the Secretary of State agree with me that the Government of the Irish Republic are to be commended for the speed and determination with which they tackled the suggestion that large sums of money were being deposited in their bank for use by terrorists? Even if the right hon. Gentleman is not yet in a position to do the same thing in Northern Ireland, does he not nevertheless believe that a detailed scrutiny of the finances of the Provisional Sinn Fein might yield interesting results? Where does that organisation find the money to man a full-time office, full of sophisticated equipment that is used to spread propaganda around the world? From where does that organisation get the tens of thousands of pounds to fight the elections that it has fought during the past two or three years? Should we not be seeking the answers to those questions?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman about the Irish Government's action. I agree that one of the areas upon which a robust security policy has to concentrate is the Provisional IRA's source of funds. We all know, alas, of the money that it receives from the United States. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken vigorous action on that. There is also the money that it derives from all kinds of fraud and rackets throughout the island of Ireland. As the hon. Member will be aware, the RUC is now spending more time and effort on that.

Mr. Latham: Unless he comes up with some better ideas as the result of his review, will my right hon. Friend start from the basic proposition that he should at least match the anti-terrorist action taken by the Irish Government to cut off the funds of these terrible people?

Mr. Hurd: We already have powers on the statute book which are not comparable with those which existed in Northern Ireland before. We have the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and the Theft Act 1968. Those powers are formidable taken together. We are now urgently considering whether they need to be reinforced.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Will the Secretary of State consider the matter carefully, because in my view the Northern Ireland (Emergency Powers) Act 1978 is not enough? If it was right to sequestrate the funds of the NUM for not having a ballot, would it not be right to sequestrate the funds of the paramilitary organisations, which never believe in a ballot?

Mr. Hurd: I do not beleive that the comparison can be carried far, if at all. I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the subject of funds for the Provisional IRA is crucial.

Plastic Bullets

13. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many people have been *(a)* killed or *(b)* wounded by plastic or rubber bullets used by the security forces in Northern Ireland since 1968.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Since the

introduction of rubber baton rounds in 1970, and plastic baton rounds in 1973, 14 people have died as a result of their use by the security forces in Northern Ireland. Since 17 March 1981, when records were first collated, 249 people are recorded as having been injured by them.

Mr. Flannery: May I place on record my horror at the killings in Newry?

Those weapons are indiscriminate. Innocent people, including children, are often killed and blinded by them. Does the Secretary of State not think that the use of such weapons antagonises even further some sections of the minority community and results in more violence than there would otherwise be?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's first remarks. I fundamentally disagree with the second part. We never cease to look for an alternative to plastic baton rounds, but if he is asking me to support a policy that puts the security forces in a position, when they are faced with serious rioting, of resorting to lead bullets or being overwhelmed, I do not support any such policy.

Dr. Mawhinney: Does my hon.Friend agree that the best way for people to protect themselves against injury or death from plastic or rubber bullets is for them voluntarily to move away from any area of riot or disturbance in which such weapons might necessarily be used?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend has a good point. If he studies the statistics of the firing of baton rounds he will see that they closely follow the incidence of rioting in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Minister accept that we are rather surprised that the Secretary of State misunderstood my last question this afternoon? I was referring——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask a supplementary question on this question, not on his last question.

Mr. Maginnis: I was referring to those who, naively, like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), and maliciously, like the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), ask unhelpful questions. What is the Minister's opinion of their absence on Monday when the Secretary of State was making a statement about the killings in Newry?

Mr. Scott: If I understood that the hon. Gentleman was referring to those who all too often in the House, when any action or policy by the security forces seems to be effective against the terrorists, get on the coat tails of the propagandists and support them, I wholeheartedly support the point that he made.

Republic of Ireland

14. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is satisfied with progress towards improving relations with the Republic of Ireland since the last meeting of the heads of Government.

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ross: Does the Secretary of State agree that many of the statements coming from the Taoiseach and other senior Ministers in Dublin over the past few weeks have been extremely helpful? Can he confirm that meaningful discussions are continuing, and does he hope that in due course there will be another meeing between the Heads of State which will bring positive results?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir. The dialogue which the two Heads of Government agreed should continue is continuing. It is confidential, and the hon. Gentleman will not expect me to say much about its contents. However, we envisage—as did the Chequers communiqué'—that there will be, at the right time, a further summit meeting.

Mr. John David Taylor: As one of the most important issues in relation to the Republic of Ireland is security co-operation, can the Secretary of State explain why the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Chief Commissioner of the Garda have not met once in the past two years to discuss border security?

Mr. Hurd: There is reasonably good co-operation across the border between the Garda and the RUC. From time to time there are meetings at various senior levels. However, it is certainly important that the Chief Commissioner of the Garda and the Chief Constable of the RUC should be in close, co-operative touch.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

1. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Ross: The principal findings of the Bridge report published yesterday leave far too many questions unanswered. Has the right hon. Lady seen the film produced recently for ITV which contains the allegations of Miss Massiter and others? If not, will she find time to see it during the course of the day or possibly on Channel 4 tomorrow, when I gather that it is to be shown to the public? Alternatively, does the right hon. Lady wish to see the establishment of a McCarthyite structure in this country such as existed in the United States in the early 1950s?

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for the intelligence services has been discharged in the same way by all Governments, including the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supported in office. It has been recognised by all Governments that what they can say on the matter on the Floor of the House is very limited. The last Labour Prime Minister said:

"I shall adhere to the normal practice of not commenting on security matters."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1978; Vol. 952, c. *631*.]

I called in Lord Bridge to make certain that there had been no unauthorised interception through the procedure adopted by Ministers. He fully discharged that responsibility.

Mr. Maclean: Has my right hon. Friend seen reports that the British Rail unions are seeking pay rises of over 30 per cent? In view of the fact that in recent months the prehistoric leadership of those unions has deliberately sabotaged the freight network to the tune of £200 million,

does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be no pay rises for British Rail staff this year until there have been productivity gains on a similar scale?

The Prime Minister: British Rail has already lost a great deal of income through not carrying sufficient coal and, in some cases, because during the coal strike there has not been enough coal to carry. I hope that all those who work for British Rail will make it their top priority to get back both freight and passenger traffic.

Mr. Coleman: It is reported that, since her visit to the United States the Prime Minister has been enthusiastically inbued with the idea of substituting vouchers for supplementary benefit. Is she aware that members of families who suffered under parish relief and the ministrations of relieving officers in pre-war days could give her advice on the indignity of such a system, without such a costly visit? Will the Prime Minister recognise that if she proceeds with that idea it will be fought line by line and inch by inch by those of us who had that experience?

The Prime Minister: I have no intention of substituting vouchers for supplementary benefits.

Q3. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the strike action taken by teachers is unprofessional and irresponsible? Will she consider the provision of a no-strike clause in teachers' employment terms?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the strike action taken by teachers is deplorable and damaging to the children in their care. My hon. Friend will be aware that at least one teachers' union — I believe that there is more than one — has a no-strike clause in its constitution. We applaud that as being in keeping with the professional standards that we expect of teachers. I hope that it will be followed by other unions.

Mr. Steel: As the Prime Minister accepts that she has a duty to maintain public confidence in the security services, does she agree that there is something lacking in a report which does not address itself to complaints about surveillance not authorised by a ministerial warrant, blanket surveillance under single ministerial warrants or the widespread interception of transatlantic calls, which are not subject to ministerial warrant at all? Do not those issues need to be addressed?

The Prime Minister: As I said in a previous reply, all Governments have discharged their responsibility for the intelligence and security services very carefully. All have been governed by the same practices. Sometimes when we were in opposition I came to the House to support the then Home Secretary—he will know the occasions—because I accepted the practices and traditions that govern the service. It is vital that we do nothing to undermine the security services or to undermine the freedom on which the country depends.

Q4. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Does the Prime Minister recall that passage in her speech to the Tory party conference in which she said that she wanted to reduce the influence of the state over the individual? Is she not being two-faced in this matter? Is not the Government's real policy one of cutting the welfare side of the state — housing, social services and education — while massively increasing the repressive arm of the state, taking away civil liberties in the process? In this latter respect, is she not becoming to the British state what Joe Stalin was to the Soviet one?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will go to the Soviet Union for a considerable length of time and see how he enjoys the comparison.

Mr. Churchill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is reckless and irresponsible of the Leader of the Opposition to promise the Kremlin the two highest priorities on its shopping list — a nuclear-disarmed Britain and a break-up of the NATO Alliance by our dismissing the Americans from their nuclear bases here? Is it not strange that he should condemn American researches into space defence while not equally condemning those that have been undertaken by the Soviet Union since the middle 1970s?

The Prime Minister: For any right hon. or hon. Member to suggest that he would remove cruise missiles from Britain and then close United States' nuclear bases here is thoroughly to undermine our defence and security, freedom and democracy. It is wise to point out that, had we not remained firm in deploying cruise with our Allies, I doubt very much whether the Soviet Union would have been brought back to the negotiating table.

Mr. Ryman: Following the decision of the National Union of Mineworkers to return to work on Tuesday, is the Prime Minister aware of the vindictive and gloating attitude of the National Coal Board, which, on Tuesday morning, refused to allow 1,700 miners to return to work at Bates's colliery, Blyth?

The Prime Minister: The management of the NCB has discharged its duty at the end of the strike excellently and commendably. It is anxious to get workers working together harmoniously and back in the pits. I commend the management on the action that it has taken.

Q5. **Mr. Tracey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Tracey: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the extraordinary statement of the deputy leader of the Greater London council to the effect that GLC funds will be supplied to Labour-controlled boroughs which refuse to set a rate, so that irresponsible authorities can pay their workers when they should take responsibility for them? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is another disgraceful abuse of ratepayers' money in London.

The Prime Minister: Every council has the duty to make a legal rate, otherwise very serious consequences can follow. I believe that it is completely irresponsible to set out to assist any council which is not going to discharge, or seeks not to discharge, its legal responsibilities.

Mr. Kinnock: When this month's unemployment figures show an increase yet again of 20,000, does the Prime Minister propose to continue with the policies which have already increased unemployment by 2 million and will certainly bring even higher jobless totals if they go on?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is correct in his description of the numbers of unemployed. They have risen, seasonally adjusted, although the headline figure is down. I believe that

"the only answer to the economic problems which have dogged Britain . . . is to improve the performance of our manufacturing industry. That means higher productivity, better design, more vigorous salesmanship, more reliable delivery and servicing."

So said the right hon. Gentleman's Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Kinnock: It was convincing then. From the right hon. Lady now, it is utterly unconvincing. That response does not convince even her own hon. Friends. Her hon. Friends on the Treasury Select Committee reporting today said that the Government's attitude exacerbated the problems of the pound. The Tory Reform Group today said:

"Under the Prime Minister's policies we are not eating the seed corn, we are burning it."

Will the right hon. Lady take the advice of the Tory Reform Group and ourselves and many others? *[Interruption.]* I know that the Tory party is split, and it is demonstrating it very conclusively. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a lot of time.

Mr. Kinnock: Perhaps right hon. and hon. Gentlemen would like to take up these claims with the chairman of the Tory Reform Group—[Hon. Members : "Who is he?"] The Secretary of State for Energy. Will the Prime Minister, in any case, take its advice and increase investment in production, housebuilding and improvement, education and research before the deterioration gets even worse and before unemployment goes even higher?

The Prime Minister: It was not easy to discern a thread through the right hon. Gentleman's question, but I noticed that he disagreed with his right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), a former Chancellor of the Exchequer. That means that he disagrees with the message. I am surprised about that, because the message was clear—higher productivity, better design, more vigorous salesmanship, more reliable delivery and services. The speed at which—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the Opposition yowling at something they do not like. The speed at which we achieve those objectives will decide the speed at which we get unemployment down. With regard to the Treasury Select Committee, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition are yowling away, Mr. Speaker, as usual. The Treasury Select Committee said:

"There are good reasons why the Government should not state explicitly an exchange-rate target, ceiling or floor. To do so would reduce speculators' risks".

I agree.

Mr. Kinnock: Conservative Members are — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am doing my utmost to try to get in another Back Bencher. Mr. Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock: It is the Tory Back Benchers who are preventing that, probably by prior arrangement. There was not so much a thread on the Prime Minister's response as cobwebs. All of what she said related to six years ago —2 million jobs ago, £40,000 million of investment ago, and £50,000 million worth of oil revenues ago. In spite of that passage of time, all that the Prime Minister does is worsen the situation. Are we supposed to hang around and wait for the equivalent of Mr. John James to turn up to do for the British economy, and 3½ million unemployed people, what he has had to do for Guy's hospital.

The Prime Minister: In spite of everything that the right hon. Gentleman has said, this Government have achieved record output, a record standard of living and record investment. That is a very strong economy.

Later——

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the statements.

Sir Anthony Grant: The point arises from Question Time today, and I deferred making it until after business questions.

Mr. Speaker: Then I will take it now.

Sir Anthony Grant: You will recall, Sir, that on Tuesday my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) rightly raised with you the abuse of Prime Minister's Question Time by excessive long-windedness on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. It occurred again today. It is rapidly becoming an abuse of the House. Although I appreciate that you give some licence to Front-Bench spokesmen, could you tell the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen that sometimes the shortest interventions are the most effective? To be perfectly fair, would you also tell Members on the Government Front Bench that sometimes the shortest answers are the most effective?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman's comment will have been taken to heart. However, that is not a matter with which I can deal.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows.

MONDAY 11 MARCH—Opposition Day (9th Allotted Day): Debate on an Opposition motion on record unemployment and the need for new industrial policies.

TUESDAY 12 MARCH — Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill. Motion on the Immobilisation of Vehicles Illegally Parked (London Boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea) (Continuation) Order.

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH—Motion relating to the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) Order.

THURSDAY 14 MARCH—Estimates Day (2nd Allotted Day): Until about seven o'clock, consideration of the following estimate:

Class IV, Vote 5 industrial support (Department of Energy) the appropriate report will be shown on the Order Paper as relevant.

Afterwards, a debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House on Cmnd. 9447, the Government's observations on the fifth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee Session 1983-84 on the Falkland Islands.

The questions will be put on all outstanding Supplementary Estimates and Votes.

Proceedings on the Cinemas Bill (Lords), which is a consolidation measure.

FRIDAY 15 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 18 MARCH — Until about seven o'clock, debate on motions relating to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment Regulations, and the equivalent regulations for Scotland.

Motion on Eurppean Community proposals for the 1985-86 CAP prices.

. [Relevant Documents for Monday 18 March: 1. 4582/85, ADD 1, ADD 2 & COR 1(e), ADD 3: CAP Prices (1985/1986); 2. 4637/85: Situation in Agricultural Markets (1984); 3. Unnumbered: Aid to German farmers.

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee: 1. HC 5-xiv (1984-85); 2. HC 5-xiv (1984-85); 3. HC 78-xxxiii (1983-84) para. 11.]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful. May I first tell the right hon. Gentleman that the Second Reading of the Interception of Communications Bill next Tuesday should be further postponed until proper answers have been given to the serious allegations made in the Channel 4 television programme and to the matters that I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) have raised both with the Prime Minister and with the Home Secretary? Tomorrow the programme is to be shown, and its showing will illustrate the point that the report by Lord Bridge is, because of the narrow remit given to him by the Government, merely a clumsy attempt by the Government to dodge the issues of real concern. Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that, as long as the Government take that attitude, more people will believe that they have something to hide? Does he accept t whenever the Second Reading of the Interceptio Communications Bill takes place, that consideration r largely dominate the proceedings in the House?

On the business for 15 March, the motion relatin the National Health Service (General Medical Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment Regulations need at least a full day. Will the right hon. Gentle rearrange business on that day to provide the ti Finally, I have asked several times in recent weeks debates in Government time on the proposed closur one third of Britain's network of skillcentres, on a re by the Commission for Racial Equality and on the P Minister's proposals for British participation in star w research. Will the Leader of the House now assure House that we can have those debates before the Ea recess?

Mr. Biffen: I note that the right hon. Gentle suggests that the Second Reading of the Interceptio Communications Bill might be further postponed. I do feel able to agree with him. The Bill was published o February. It is a matter of genuine concern that Parlia should debate it and proceed with it. The right Gentleman will recollect that some of the points he r about the Bridge report were referred to and dealt wit my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier afternoon.

As to the question of there being a full day's de upon the National Health Service (General Medical Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment Regulations Monday 18 March, I take note of the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. Perhaps that might be pur through the usual channels.

In regard to skillcentres, I stand by what I said ea about the importance of this topic for a Commons deb but there will be an opportunity at least for its inclu in the more general discussions on unemploymen Monday.

As for the questions about debates upon the CRE upon star wars, I have nothing further to add to what I already said. I note the interest that is shown in the po

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend wi aware that shortly before Christmas the House of L Select Committee on Science and Technology produc report of immense significance on education and trai for new technology. When will we have a chanc discussing that? In particular, when will we hav opportunity to discuss our reaction to our recommendations in that context?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend said. No allocation of time has been made for the we prospect, but I shall bear in mind the point he make

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does right hon. Gentleman recognise that he may underestimated the number of hon. Members who concerned about the Government's limited list prop and also about the problems of Scotland, on whi separate order is to be considered? Does he recognise in the way he has proposed the business we will eve deprived of the one and a half hours between 10 o'c and 11.30 which would have been available for that d had it been for the whole day or for the latter part o day?

Mr. Biffen: On the second point, I shall be happy to look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman identifies. On the first point, as I said to the Leader of the Opposition, it is a matter for further consideration through the usual channels.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): My right hon. Friend will have noticed the extraordinarily light sentence passed by the magistrates on the chief perpetrator of the violence at the Chelsea match this week. This has further angered and frustrated many of my hon. Friends. Is it possible to have a debate on the subject so that the views of the House can be made clear to the judiciary?

Mr. Biffen: Obviously I cannot offer a debate in Government time next week. I have a lively sympathy with my hon. Friend, but he might consider the opportunities that there are for him as a private Member.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): May we have an early statement next week about contradictory statements on regional aid that have been made by the Minister of State, Department of Industry? He is always telling the House that the Government cannot help some areas because less than 35 per cent. of the working population live in designated areas. He told the House on 28 November that we had to negotiate that 35 per cent. with the EC, but on Tuesday in a parliamentary answer to me he said that there is no maximum of 35 per cent. at all for the whole of the EC. Can we have the truth? Is there a limit, as the Minister said in November, or is there no limit, as he said on Tuesday?

Mr. Biffen: I will draw the attention of my hon. Friend to the point that the right hon. Gentleman has made. Of course, the right hon. Gentleman may consider that, since Monday's debate is drawn also to include the need for new industrial policies, he can make the point on that occasion.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the importance of the coming Monday, which is Commonwealth Day? May I also draw his attention to early-day motion 450?

[That this House wishes to be associated with all other Commonwealth Parliaments in the observance of Commonwealth Day on 11th March, and with the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which brings together leaders of 1,000 million Commonwealth people of diverse races, cultures and religions, who pursue the same ideals of Parliamentary democracy, individual freedom and peace in the world; and urges that especially in this Interrational Youth Year the best ideals of the young people of the Commonwealth should be encouraged.]

That motion stands in the names of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. On behalf of the Government, will he endorse our continuing support of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, particularly at this time when we have here 25 commonwealth visitors?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend does the House a service by reminding us every year at this time of the significance of the Commonwealth, and particularly of the important role that the CPA has played in developing a mutual understanding by all of one another's institutions. I am very happly to meet his request.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made next week on the Government's policy on miners going back to work in the pits? Is he aware that hundreds of miners are still awaiting their court appearances and that many of them are charged with minor misdemeanours? Nevertheless, the NCB is refusing to allow them to start work. Is there not a principle in this country of assuming that people are innocent until they are found guilty? Why is such discrimination taking place? Hundreds of miners have been before the courts, have been found not guilty, and have had their cases dismissed, yet the NCB is acting in this vindictive way. Is it the Government's or the NCB's policy?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in welcoming the massive return to work in the mining industry. I shall draw the relevant Minister's attention to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the debate on the order on Wednesday can run until 11.30 pm? Will he also confirm that, whatever orders may have been laid to date, by the time that Wednesday comes they will exclude from the limits imposed all expenditure consequent upon the buy-back of defective housing, pursuant to the Housing Defects Act 1984?

Mr. Biffen: I can give my hon. Friend the first assurance that he seeks. I shall refer his second point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Given the earlier revelations of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) about insurance companies in London insuring people against being kidnapped, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the relevant Minister makes a statement on that issue, and allow a debate in the near future so that hon. Members can express their views? Alternatively, will the Government adopt an ambiguous approach such as that adopted by a previous Administration, who installed free of charge telex machines in Sinn Fein incident centres, for which I do not believe they are getting any rent?

Mr. Biffen: I can probably best help the hon. Gentleman in the first instance by referring the matter to the relevant Minister.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is it not a little surprising and, indeed, disappointing that the House of Lords should have been able to discuss the report of the Public Accounts Committee with regard to the De Lorean scandal, together with the Government's response to it, before any debate has been fixed for this House? Can we please have an early date for a debate?

Mr. Biffen: I have already implied that there could be a reasonably early debate on the report of the Public Accounts Committee in respect of the De Lorean affair. I hope that I shall be able to satisfy my hon. Friend more specifically fairly soon.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for the House to debate the report of the Transport Committee on the White Paper "Buses"? That might give the Secretary of State an opportunity to come out of hiding. No one has seen him since the publication of that report. He certainly has not attended the Standing Committee dealing with the Transport Bill.

Mr. Biffen: If, through the haze of the past 48 hours, I recollect aright, I think that the hon. Gentleman was in danger of losing his birthday. However, I am glad to see him in his place and thus recovered. The Government will, of course, wish to consider the Select Committee's report at the first appropriate moment.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): In view of the unhealthy interest in some sections of the press, particularly in *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, about security matters, and in view of the fact that almost no one else is interested in the subject, can my right hon. Friend arrange that the House goes into secret session next week when we debate the Interception of Communications Bill?

Mr. Biffen: I think that my hon. Friend makes an interesting point but one sufficiently sweeping to put me in danger of seeming like a moderate.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that at this very moment many pensioners are queueing outside to get into the House so that they can tell hon. Members about the long-term decline that has taken place in their living standards since the Conservative party came into office? On this day, should not the Secretary of State for Social Services make a statement on that issue? Will the Leader of the House make arrangements so that when lobbies take place in future, elderly people and others are not kept queueing outside the House in the cold, and perhaps rain, but can queue in Westminster Hall? They could at least then have some modicum of comfort in a building that they have paid for in taxes throughout their working lives.

Mr. Biffen: The House will be anxious that appropriate arrangements are made for those wishing to undertake lobbying. That is a matter for the Services Committee, to the attention of which I will draw the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. He will appreciate that the Secretary of State for Social Services is first for questions next Tuesday and he may wish to make his points then.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): The country was not impressed by yesterday's performance. What steps does my right hon. Friend intend to take when the Water (Fluoridation) Bill returns from another place to ensure that that process is not repeated?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend may care to use his undoubted persuasive powers among a few of those who sit close by him.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the Leader of the House aware of the fresh warnings of the gathering crisis in research and development in this country? Yesterday, the motor industry warned that the total United Kingdom spend on research in that industry is only 1 per cent. of United States Government support for research in their industry. Today, the Science and Engineering Research Council warned of the woefully inadequate research in engineering as a whole. Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for a debate on the whole question as a matter of urgency, before science and technology in this country disappear altogether?

Mr. Biffen: The debate on Monday will deal with the desirability of new industrial policies, and I should have thought that that would give the hon. Gentleman exactly the opportunity he is seeking.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Mem hope that he will provide a full day for the debate on limited list?

Mr. Biffen: I note the point.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Lead the House aware, in view of Lord Bridge's farcical re that before the Second Reading of the telephone tap Bill we need a proper report dealing with the harass suffered by trade unionists and peace campaigners a hands of the security service and the special branch the Home Secretary has stated that campaigning unilateral nuclear disarmament is perfectly legitimate, the Leader of the House make sure that before the Se Reading of that Bill the Home Secretary explains wh ex-editor of the CND journal was questioned closely by police about leading personalities in CND—about private lives and the leadership style of the ge secretary—practices which have more in common Russia and Czechoslavakia than with a democracy?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot, in answering the Gentleman's first point, go beyond the answer that I to the Leader of the Opposition. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of the Home Secretary.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I sup the request for a full day's debate on the National He Service which, with the considerable increases resources under the present Government and m improved management, is now the jewel in the crow the Government. As for Tuesday's business, will my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members should believe everything they see on television?

Mr. Biffen: I note the point that my hon. Friend m and that she is one of those who joins the Leader of Opposition in asking that Monday's business reconsidered. I have undertaken to do that.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the Le of the House ensure that next week the Prime Min makes a statement about what has happened this wee relation to sackings by the National Coal Board? I aware that many hon. Members would like to know working miners at Kiveton Park, many of whom praised for trying to break the strike, were sacked w the majority of men returned to work on Tuesday? should also like to know why others have been suspen prior to going for trial. The Prime Minister said Tuesday that serious crime would be a sackable offe Is the Leader of the House aware that we should like to her why some who took coal from pit waste tips to tr keep their families warm during the winter months being considered to have committed a serious cri Some of my constituents have been sacked this week having taken coal off tips.

Mr. Biffen: I should not like to prejudge w ministerial responsibility for these matters lies, but s the hon. Gentleman asks me to draw the Prime Minist attention to the subject, I shall undertake to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-W Will the Government provide the opportunity for a de on the operation of the wages councils? Is my right Friend aware that on Tuesday there was widesp disappointment on the Government Benches after it

suggested in the *Financial Times* that the Government were on the verge of making a decision to retain the wages councils, albeit in a modified form? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that there will be anger outside when it is realised that these councils price people of all ages out of work?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will appreciate that Monday's debate will cover employment and pricing people out of work, or into work. Once the Budget has been announced, there will be a number of opportunities for considering general economic issues, of which the wages councils are a part. I say that because I have no specific plans for a debate on the wages councils.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): If the Leader of the House cannot help my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) with a statement, can he provide a debate in Government time on the miners sacked during the dispute? Is he aware that Mr. John Northard, the NCB's western area director, has said that no miners whom he has sacked will get their jobs back? Is he aware that that includes four Stoke-on-Trent miners who were sacked before their case went before the court? When their case came before the court neither the coal board nor the police offered any evidence against them and their case was dismissed. Is he aware that those four men remain sacked? Will the Leader of the House provide a debate so that we can ensure that the treatment of miners at different coalfields is equal, fair and just?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman identifies a constituency problem. I suggest that he tries his chance at an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Back Benchers feel strongly about Monday week's debate on the limited list? Does he accept that two and a half hours for Back Benchers is not enough? My right hon. Friend has said that he would like the debate to end at 7 o'clock. Will it be a time-limited debate, and if it is not how does he propose to bring it to an end at 7 o'clock?

Mr. Biffen: Since my hon. Friend has worked in the Whips Office, he knows precisely what the answer is. I take note of his voice among others which seek a reconsideration of Monday week's business.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Can I press the Leader of the House for a proper early debate — not an Adjournment debate—on an amnesty for sacked miners who have been denied their jobs by the National Coal Board, often for petty reasons? Is there not a need for a proper debate on the general issues, because the NCB's policy is nothing short of victimisation? A debate is especially important as allegations have been made that the NCB has broken the same law—the Miners and Quarries Act—under which they are denying miners their jobs? A general debate is very important.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate some hon. Members' strong feelings about the topic. On Monday my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will be answering questions. Initially, the hon. Gentleman might see how far he can take the argument then.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that none of next week's debates are to do with extending yet more borrowing to that bottomless financial sink in Brussels? Will my right hon. Friend also put the record straight about yesterday's business? Obviously, our hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) got what happened wrong from the newspapers. The reason why we lost yesterday's business was not to do with those who are concerned about fluoridation. They asked for further consideration to be adjourned at 1.25 am yesterday. The Government whipped Members into the Lobby to keep the debate going, thereby losing yesterday's business. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House why they did that?

Mr. Biffen: The great occasion on Thursday afternoon is to look to the future rather than to hold inquests on the past. Regarding my hon. Friend's first points, I have not been briefed on the matter, but I am sure that we both hope that the answer is no.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): does my right hon. Friend recall that during the past few months I have several times requested that the House debates the divide between the north and the south of England? Since I last rose, only three weeks ago, I have received many letters and comments of support from all sides of the political spectrum that it is time that the House discussed fully, not just in an Adjournment debate, the economic, social and cultural divide between the north and the south, which is growing apace. Until we debate that matter, the divide will continue.

Mr. Biffen: I wish that debates could cure that. Shortly, we shall have the Budget, and thereafter there will be ample opportunities for economic arguments of the sort that I know my hon. Friend would employ on this important issue.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Leader of the House aware that the miners in my constituency marched back to work this morning? Is he further aware that they are most unlikely to be willing to produce much coal until their comrades who were unreasonably sacked during the strike have been reinstated? Is he aware of the deplorable situation in Scotland and will he provide an urgent debate on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and I am sure that his identification with the returning miners was a most patrician occasion. However, I do not think that I can take matters any further by finding time for such a debate next week.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As, unfortunately, any increase in the BBC licence fee can and probably will be implemented before the House votes on it, will my right hon. Friend at least undertake to have a debate on this subject before the Home Secretary comes to a decision so that the many hon. Members who are wholly opposed to the figure that the BBC is seeking can register opposition?

Mr. Biffen: As I understand it, any increase in the licence fee would be subject to a negative resolution of the House and there could, therefore, be a debate on it.

Mr. Harris: That would be afterwards.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Bearing in mind that the negotiations about the enlargement of the European Community to include Spain and Portugal are now reaching a crucial stage, will my right hon. Friend undertake to use his best endeavours to allow the House

[Mr. Eric Forth]

to debate the effects that that would have on the United Kingdom and the EC before the United Kingdom takes its final decision in the negotiations? Will he ensure that we are not faced with a fait accompli by the Government after they have acceded to the negotiations?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's truly important point, and I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the vast current account deficit in the United States is leading to powerful pressure within the United States for protectionist trade measures which, if enacted, would have a disastrous effect on world trade and on our exports? Is it not time that we had a major debate about instituting new talks about GATT?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises an important point, but no Government time has been made available for such a discussion next week. However, I shall certainly bear his point in mind.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that a number of City institutions have recently sponsored public share issues in property companies in a way which enables investors to take advantage of the substantial tax concessions available under the business expansion scheme? Since this is clearly an abuse of the spirit of the scheme, which was designed to promote job-creating investment, will he find time for a debate on this subject?

Mr. Biffen: I can think of no better example of a topic that properly belongs to the Budget debate, the Finance Bill and all that follows from it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend allow an early debate on early-day motion 463?

[That, in the opinion of this House, the Nati of Operative Printers and Assistants shoul amnesty to those of its members who refused week levy to the miners' strike, who were s tried by a kangaroo court and fined £50, and w against the court's sentence is shortly to be hea all other unions which have treated thei similarly should refrain from any further ac them.]

The motion draws attention to the plig unionists in my constituency and elsewhe victimised because they refused to contribute levy for striking miners, imposed without a vote? They have since had to appear before court and have been fined £50. They are appea that and are worried about their jobs because a closed shop. Could we debate the possi amnesty for those wholly innocent people?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for point, and I believe I am right in saying that h the attention of the House to this matter previ offer no Government time for such a debate ne I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South) *ro*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. and learned M Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) has not been ri but I will call him as it is just before 4 o'clo

Mr. Spencer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. capped councils such as Leicester which are h rate meetings today fail to fix rates, will my Friend arrange for an early statement s uncertainty facing ratepayers can be removed

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right the Secretary of State for the Environment, be understand the point that has been made.

Rates (Scotland)

4.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make an announcement about revaluation and rate support grant in Scotland. As hon. Members know, there has been a revaluation of property in Scotland which will come into effect on 1 April this year. I believe that such regular revaluations are essential to maintain a fair distribution of burdens within the rating system. In considering the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86 I have had very much in mind the special issues which revaluation raises.

It is, however, now becoming very clear that authorities are not heeding my repeated warnings to contain their expenditure. Spending in both 1984-85 and 1985-86 will continue to be above the Government's plans. I will, of course, be closely examining the budgets of all authorities to see whether any are planning expenditure of a level which would make it necessary for me to take selective action to reduce their rates. I would also remind all authorities that the penalties for overspending in 1985-86 will be much more severe than in 1984-85.

I consider that the increases in rate bills now emerging are in general so steep that I must take further action to protect domestic ratepayers. I have therefore decided to increase the total of aggregate Exchequer grant and within it the domestic element of rate support grant by £38·5 million, making it possible to increase domestic rate relief to 8p per pound of rateable value. This is an eightfold increase over 1984-85, from £14 million to £102 million. Domestic rate relief is a direct relief on each £1 of rateable value, and accordingly the benefit from it increases with rateable value. The necessary order will be laid shortly.

The increase in domestic rates will in total now be reduced from 24 per cent. to about 17 per cent. The increases for individual domestic ratepayers will in many cases be higher, and in many cases lower, than this figure, depending on the level of spending in their local authorities and changes in the pattern of valuation. It is, of course, open to ratepayers to appeal against their valuation and we have made improvements in appeal procedures in the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984.

The cost of increasing domestic rate relief in this way will be financed by adjustments within my existing policies and expenditure programmes.

As I have said, the object of revaluation is to apportion the rate burden fairly. This means that some pay a larger share and some a smaller share. That is justifiable, but it is necessary to have regard to the effects on domestic ratepayers in current circumstances. This I have done with a substantial increase in domestic rate relief.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Secretary of State must think that Scotland's ratepayers are daft if he believes that they will be taken in by this chickenfeed of an increase in domestic rate relief, when he, as Secretary of State, has already cut the beef substantially in the form of the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86. Are we to gather that this mean threepence of an increase in the domestic rate relief is the consolation prize to the chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland for his visit last week to London? Why is this brinkmanship coming on the last day before the district councils must notify the regional councils of their rate poundage?

Did the Secretary of State consider a variable domestic relief, since some authorities will not have such large increases in rates as a result of revaluation as will others? I note, for example, that Kyle and Carrick and Argyll councils come into that category, although the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)—is still, unhappily, on the shelf of a high revaluation authority. Did the Secretary of State consider a revaluation-capping exercise to assist the authorities that will be especially disadvantaged by revaluation?

How can the Secretary of State have the gall to suggest that a 17 per cent. increase is not steep? What will be the increase for the commercial sector in Scotland? I know that areas such as Dumfries and Galloway are extremely worried about the impact of revaluation. As to appeals, is not the Secretary of State thrusting his responsibilities onto the appeals machinery?

The Secretary of State said that the proposal does not call for extra money, and that he will find it from existing programmes. Where will he find that extra money? We asked him to postpone the revaluation or to pay in full the increase in domestic relief that would be required to obviate the impact of revaluation on the domestic sector, but he has done neither. He talked about protecting the domestic ratepayer, but he is giving them as much protection as a grizzly bear gives to his victim as he is about to extinguish all life from it.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that he is the spokesman of a party which recently reaffirmed that it supports revaluation and agrees that it should go ahead. He described the proposal in various splendid ways, including calling it chickenfeed. He might wish to know that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which is not exactly opposed to the views of the Labour party, asked for an increase of £31 million to help domestic ratepayers, and I have today announced a £38·5 million increase for that purpose.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we made the announcement on the last day before the districts must give their rating details to the regions. The answer is that this is the first day on which I could have made the announcement, after putting together the package, following the announcement of the full details of the effects of rate changes on various areas. The hon. Gentleman suggested variable domestic relief, but he has not taken fully into account the fact that the method of payment of the relief means that the higher the rateable value of the property in question, the more help its owner will receive from the change. Therefore, it allows for the fact that some need more help than others.

The hon. Gentleman suggested the capping of revaluation. If he really believes that that is practicable, he must have a poor appreciation of what revaluation is about. The object of revaluation is to ensure that the share paid by each category of ratepayer is more or less fair in current circumstances. As I have already said, the hon. Gentleman's party and the leader of that party in Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), agree with that system and support it. The hon. Gentleman said that I had suggested that an increase of 17 per cent. was not steep. That is not the case. I consider that it is a very steep increase. The increases that have been responsible for revaluation in Scotland still amount to about 12 per cent. The rest is due to overspending by local

[Mr. Younger]

authorities which have refused to bring their spending under control. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The hon. Gentleman's party and his colleagues have been more responsible than anybody else for encouraging overspending. As for money, about £26 million will come from reductions in my cash-limited programmes in 1985-86. The programmes mainly affected are likely to be industry, largely the Scottish Development Agency, roads and transport, the urban programme, health and housing. I have also taken some account of the grant penalties that are likely to arise from local authority overspending.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): May I give a warm welcome to my right hon. Friend's statement and congratulate him upon his success in assisting domestic ratepayers in Scotland? Is he aware that this increase to 8p will more than halve the rise due to revaluation and that it will be of substantial benefit to the domestic ratepayer? Will he further confirm that the sum of £38 million is far more than was requested by the local authorities, who asked only for £31 million.?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He is perfectly correct. The combined effect of all the domestic rate relief that we have produced and largely paid for has been more than to halve the effect of revaluation on domestic ratepayers. I have no doubt that people in general will notice that whereas the Labour party, in the form of its representatives in local government, seems to do everything possible — particularly yesterday — to increase rates by every means that it can, this party has put a great deal of money into helping domestic ratepayers in order to ease the burden upon them.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Secretary of State aware that his 17 per cent. increase is between three and four times the current rate of inflation? How can that be justified? Why is there a second revaluation in Scotland before revaluation has taken place south of the border? Finally, will the Secretary of State at last do something towards redeeming the Tory promise of reforming the whole of the rating system, in view of what Scottish ratepayers have suffered during the past few years under this Government?

Mr. Younger: I thought that the right hon. Gentleman would be quicker than most to believe that Scotland should go its own way when it wishes to do so. He may recall that the revaluation system is completely different in Scotland. We had revaluations in 1961, 1966, 1971, 1978 and 1985. The effect of those revaluations has been to keep our valuations much more up to date than those south of the border. As for costs, I am glad to note that the Western Isles council appears to have announced rates increases which are considerably less than those in most of the rest of Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman must be glad about that. I should also have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome, if nobody else would, the fact that one of the effects of this revaluation is to make substantial reductions in industrial rates in Scotland. This is very important for jobs. For example, he might like to know that the assessor in Strathclyde informs me that the result of revaluation will be that standard industrial units in East Kilbride will have their rates burden reduced by 18 per cent. I wonder what they will think if the right hon. Gentleman presses for that not to happen.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be widely welcomed in Scotland, not least by my constituents who are the most highly rated in Scotland? Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the key elements in rates increases is the insatiable appetite for spending of Labour authorities? It is only thanks to the action that my right hon. Friend has taken that rate levels have not been higher. Will he bear in mind that there is deep apprehension in many district councils about the shape of the possible rate support grant settlement for 1986-87. Will he further accept that there is a deep desire, as yet unrequited, for a reform of the domestic rating system in Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments on all of those points. On his last point, he knows that my right hon. Friends and I are involved in a further study of what improvements can be made to the rating system. He is quite right in saying that there are gainers and losers in any revaluation. I have mentioned some of the industrial gainers. It is also the case that to quite a large extent such items as sports grounds, in which a great deal of interest has been taken in recent years, do rather better out of this revaluation than would otherwise have been the case. None of these gainers would have gained anything if there had been no revaluation. That is the answer to those who say that they would rather not have had a rating revaluation. As my hon. Friend rightly points out, it is this Government alone who have stood out with determination to ensure that the effects upon domestic ratepayers are not too severe. It is the Labour party, through its local government representatives, that is uncorking the champagne and flying the red flag with joy because of the increased expenditure that it is imposing upon ratepayers.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Does the Secretary of State not recognise that when he crept into the House this afternoon to make his statement it was to tell us that the local government financial strategy over which he presides is in tatters and that throughout Scottish local government there is no confidence either in him or in his Ministers? This is just another admission that we are to have statement after statement about local authority finance from the Secretary of State but never any success in administering it. Since so many people are to be so badly disadvantaged by revaluation will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that his officials advise every householder in Scotland of his right of appeal, how to appeal and how to make sure that the result of that procedure will be that some justice will be rescued from the injustice that he is creating?

Mr. Younger: On the latter point, I can certainly confirm that we shall do everything we can, as is usual, to advise people of their right of appeal and how to appeal. I am sure that many people will do so. However, I am slightly puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's intervention. Although this statement is mostly about Government help to the domestic ratepayer, I thought that the hon. Gentleman would intervene to thank me for the fact that as a result of this revaluation Burroughs in Cumbernauld is having a rates reduction, I understand from the assessor, of about 23 per cent. I should have thought the hon. Gentleman would thank me for that.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Aberdeen, where there has been

very substantial revaluation, this news will be most welcome? Will he agree with me that during the course of this week Aberdeen district council made an extremely responsible response to his request that it should attempt to meet the guidelines? Does he agree that that salutary example should be followed throughout Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was pleased to see the press reports of the decision taken this week by Aberdeen district council. I also welcome its decision on housing. This was in contradistinction to the advice given to it by many people in the Labour party. As my hon. Friend has pointed out this Labour council acted against the encouragement given by many of its friends to councils throughout Scotland to defy the law and increase the rates.

Mr. Gregor Mackenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Is the Secretary of State aware that many hon. Members regard announcements of this kind as a very piecemeal way of dealing with the very serious problem of rating valuation? Secondly, are we right to assume—I think we are—that this is not £38 million of new money? The Secretary of State said that about £26 million of the £38 million has to be taken from the Scottish Development Agency, from industrial growth, from the roads programme and from other essentials that had been earmarked for the promotion of industry in Scotland. Did I hear the Secretary of State aright when he said that in order to make this announcement he is taking that sum of money away from industry?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman's first point is valid. The reason why I have acted in two stages is that information about the effect on many classes of ratepayer has been made available at various points during the course of the revaluation. I have acted as quickly as it has been possible to act when I have had the information upon which to act. However, I take the right hon. Gentleman's point that it would have been better if we could have done it all at once. However, we did not have the information to enable us to do so. As for the money, the right hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. There is no such thing as "new" money. All the money comes from taxpayers and ratepayers. What I have had to do—and it has been very difficult—has been to re-order the priorities within the Scottish budget. If it is necessary to help some people, somebody else has to find the money. That I have managed to do.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the further increase in domestic rate relief will be welcomed warmly by Conservative Members and by those who pay rates? *[Laughter.]* Labour Members seem surprised. Is it not a fact that only a limited number of electors pay rates? Does he accept that this further increase in domestic rate relief will cushion further the effect of the revaluation, the legal requirement for which was introduced by the previous Labour Government? Finally, will he review urgently the rate support grant distribution formulae and consider sympathetically the prospect of continuing to seek a better way of raising local taxation?

Mr. Younger: I confirm that I shall continue to do what my hon. Friend urges in the last part of his question. He is right to say that the whole population does not pay rates. The amount of domestic rate relief is proportionate to the rates that an individual has to pay. This means that all ratepayers derive some benefit and that those who have the greatest burden receive the greatest assistance. I confirm that we shall continue to do all that we can to make the rate support formula meet as nearly as possible the needs of ratepayers and the system.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am sure that ratepayers will welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has bowed under the storm of protest that has greeted the revaluation. However, there will still be considerable dismay at what he is doing. I have received many letters from my constituents on this issue. The right hon. Gentleman has been developing the humbug that the rating consequences are all due to the Scargillites in Edinburgh and Stirling. Gordon district council and the Conservative-controlled Grampian regional council have kept entirely within the right hon. Gentleman's guidelines, yet before his announcement today the ratepayers in those authorities were faced with a 42 per cent. cash increase in what they pay in rates. His announcement will serve to reduce the increase to 34 per cent. I do not believe that those ratepayers will be very impressed with the way in which the Government are helping them. The money that is to be used to achieve the reduction will come from cutting an already savagely cut Scottish Office budget. This will lead to further problems in other sectors of the Scottish economy and he and his Government will pay the consequences at the end of the day.

Mr. Younger: It is appropriate that the hon. Gentleman should have made those remarks. It is only the Liberal party which believes that money can be produced by inventing it and plucking it from thin air. It is obvious that money has to come from somewhere, and the only area from which it can come is from other programmes.

I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will find that many of his constituents will regard my announcement with dismay. If they are dismayed by the prospect of having an extra 3p in the pound to help towards their domestic rates, the hon. Gentleman's constituents are not the same as mine. I am left wondering whether the hon. Gentleman has had time since the rate support grant debate that took place a few weeks ago to check with the district council in his constituency, whose domestic rate is 9p in the pound, why it appears to be necessary for it to budget for about 80 per cent. of its balances. That seems a strange decision, but it is for the council to make it. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will look into that.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his welcome news today, which will be of considerable value in rural areas. I agree very much with his comments in response to the question from the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). Will my hon. Friend ensure that an appropriate proportion of the relief will go to rural areas of the sort that are to be found in my constituency? The councils in these areas have suffered because they adhered to the guidelines. They will welcome any benefit that they can get from the increased relief that my right hon. Friend has announced.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I can assure him that the benefit will go in proper proportion to rural areas as well as other areas. I think that it will have an equally beneficial effect on ratepayers in all areas.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman concede that a rate revaluation is designed to remove inequities in a system that is basically inequitable? It seems that he is tinkering with it and trying to create a workable system when in essence we have an unworkable public expenditure system. What overtures has he made to the Treasury to try to dissuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer from making tax cuts and encouraging him to increase real public expenditure as it relates to the needs of the people of Scotland and elsewhere?

Mr. Younger: That is a wider question. The hon. Gentleman will soon have an opportunity to question my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his judgment of what is the best way of using public money to help many different interest groups in Scotland and Britain generally.

I do not go along entirely with the hon. Gentleman's definition of the purpose of rate revaluations. He suggested that their purpose was to remove inequities, but they are introduced to remove inequalities which arise during the passage of time. That is why, the more frequent the revaluations, within reason, the fairer the system is. It has been said that there is no statutory requirement to have revaluations, but that is not so. There is a statutory requirement to have revaluations in Scotland——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The right hon. Gentleman postponed the revaluation.

Mr. Younger: ——every five years unless an order is put before the House for postponement. The Government have already put an order before the House to postpone the revaluation for two years. We cannot continue postponing revaluations from year to year without making the system extremely unfair. We have taken what is clearly the right decision.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): May I thank my right hon. Friend for his customary chivalry in handing his water bottle to the hard-pressed domestic ratepayer as he crawls through the desert of death? He has come to the rescue of domestic ratepayers by ameliorating the effects of revaluation. Domestic ratepayers have a vote, of course, but there are many who do not pay rates who also have a vote. The rating system enables the consequences of extravagant expenditure of social administration to be placed as a burden on the backs of ratepayers and to be continued. It also enables Conservative administrations that are not profligate to be punished. It is not a good system and it should be urged upon my right hon. Friend, when he gets back his water bottle, that he redeems an impossible rating system that is unfair and contrary to our principles.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's argument. A number of authorities have been trying to increase their expenditure over a number of years. They suffer penalties for doing that, but their general activity reacts on the rest of the system and affects adversely many authorities which have been spending sensibly and reducing their expenditure. That is regrettable and I hope that all authorities will get together to try to stop that happening. I am not sure whether my hon. and learned Friend has chosen exactly the right analogy in referring to me handing a water bottle to ratepayers. When he sees the effect of the three extra pence he may consider it to b something a little stronger—perhaps a wee deoch-an doruis.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Why does th Secretary of State respond so quickly to the screams of th dying species, the Conservative voter in Scotland, wh it took him five months to respond to the legitima demands of Scottish teachers, and then only flatly to refu to give them an independent inquiry? If the Secretary State has £38·5 million to spend, would it not be better use it to increase teachers salaries? Would not parents Ayr and Eastwood prefer him to spend the money in th way rather than giving it back to them in this form of ra relief?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman f his somewhat backhanded compliment for the speed response in this instance. I am glad that I was able to a reasonably quickly when the information becam available. The teachers' dispute is a separate matter. I di not turn down the teachers' request out of hand and th hon. Gentleman should know that. I suggested a perfectl good way forward for them. Unfortunately they hav refused persistently to take it up. I can assume only th they have turned down my offer, to my great regret.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon Friend aware that the domestic ratepayers on Tayside wi be relieved that something has been done to prevent wh could have happened? My right hon. Friend must be awar that the real problem is that he is constantly faced wit high-spending authorities which, for many years, hav bought their voters' affections, and that has resulted in th re-election of those authorities. Is my right hon. Frien aware that, until the system is changed, he will continu to battle against the ever-increasing tithe and that, unde the present system, there will be no real answer to th problem? My right hon. Friend must ask his right hon. an hon. Friends to produce as a matter of urgency a syste that is fair to all those who benefit from the high-spendin authorities.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. M hon. Friends and I are far from satisfied that the ratin system is working fairly. So many people either do not pa rates or think that they do not pay rates. They therefor appear to encourage councils to spend more and more o the money which they think is not their money. Obviousl that is not a satisfactory principle, and we shall, therefore do everything we can to find ways of improving it.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): As this is th second time this year that the Secretary of State has ha to readjust his budget—first on student fees and now o the revaluation contribution—will he say what will b the impact on the industrial, health and housing sector from which this money is to come? How much mone does the right hon. Gentleman have in reserve for hi rather phoney offer to the teachers?

Mr. Younger: On the last point, I have given m answer and that answer stands. I shall make clear th details of the changes in my programmes when th necessary gross cash limit adjustments are announced. expect that the initial gross reductions on most of th affected programmes will be outweighed by increases i the cash limits during 1985-86 to carry forward the effec

of the normal entitlement of underspending on those programmes in 1984-85. The size of these increases will not be known until the end of this financial year.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): What effect will the cuts in the other budgets — for example, industry and roads — have on the Highlands regional council which, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows, is not noted for flying the red flag over Inverness? Will not the cuts simply exacerbate the present problem? Since the local government re-organisation there has been a tenfold increase in the road mileage that has to be serviced, repaired and kept up, while there has been only a doubling in the cash available for those services.

Mr. Younger: On the general effects, I shall make a detailed announcement so that hon. Members will have a clear picture of what is happening. We are able to make the necessary adjustments because we are talking about an early period in the financial year and because we can use some of the underspending in the current year. Those funds can be carried through. I believe that the changes in other programmes will not be drastic. When those changes are made, the House will be able to make known its views.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the Secretary of State now recognise that Edinburgh district council is determined to implement its mandate to improve services and create jobs? What moral authority does the right hon. Gentleman have to try to prevent the council from tackling years of appalling neglect of Edinburgh's council housing stock and from starting to raise services to the levels in other parts of Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I have read in the press only what Edinburgh district council has in mind. I do not propose making any comment on that until I have an opportunity of seeing the council's budget and the budgets of all the other local authorities in Scotland. It would not be proper for me to comment on that at this stage. I can well imagine, however, the real views of the vast majority of the Edinburgh people at the antics of the past few days. I shall leave it at that.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): If this increase in public spending can be met by creative accounting with last year's underspending, why cannot that same creative accounting be used to meet urgent calls, such as the call to increase teachers' pay? If some industrial premises are having their rateable value reduced, and bearing in mind the fact that a great many industrial premises have been turned back to green fields because of the Government's industrial policies, where is the logic of loading additional spending on to the domestic ratepayer and the SDA, which is trying to build fresh industrial premises?

Mr. Younger: As I think the hon. Gentleman appreciates, revaluation merely alters the share of rates paid by the various categories of ratepayer. It so happens that in this revaluation, which is decided entirely by assessors and not by the Government, the industrial ratepayers will carry a lower share and the domestic ratepayers a higher share of the rating burden. The domestic share of the total burden will increase by roughly 14·4 per cent. and the industry share will increase by 12·7 per cent. That can only be helpful to industry, and that is one of the purposes of revaluation.

I repeat that I have been saying for some weeks that I am prepared to look at a package put together by the SJNC for Scottish teachers. I made it clear that I was prepared to help them, but I am bound to say that it appears, after repeated efforts, that the teachers have turned down this request — I regret that — and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine how one could meet the request as time goes on.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Secretary of State accept that although the announcement is inadequate, I certainly welcome it? Will he confirm that it will do nothing for commercial ratepayers? Will the right hon. Gentleman consider examining a similar scheme to give some relief in the face of the swingeing increases in commercial rates in areas such as mine?

Mr. Younger: I fully appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point about commercial ratepayers. He and his colleagues have seen me about that matter. In general — I do not refer to the Borders particularly — the share of rates borne by commercial ratepayers will fall by 3·2 per cent. I fully accept that there are commercial ratepayers — including those from the Borders — whose valuations are fairly high, because of the assessor's assessment of their economic position compared to that of comparable premises in other parts of Scotland. There seems to be a clear case for making appeals. No doubt that will be considered in the normal process.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome this acrobatic attempt by the Secretary of State to save one of his own goals. Now that we have this implied admission that it is the unelected Secretary of State for Scotland who has been responsible for the explosion of rates in recent years, will the right hon. Gentleman apologise to the householders and to elected local authorities in Scotland for his deplorable and devious conduct towards local government finance since he came to office? Will the right hon. Gentleman estimate how many jobs will be lost as a consequence of his robbing the SDA's Peter to pay the Paul of Eastwood and Ayr?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman perhaps needs a new scriptwriter. Even by his standards, that was a remarkable question. I remind the hon. Gentleman that is a Front Bench spokesman in an Opposition party which has clearly agreed that the rating system is right and that revaluation is the right thing to do. The hon. Gentleman cannot quarrel with the fact that the independent assessors have decided that the various categories should change the share of rates that they bear. If the hon. Gentleman is at odds with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who clearly supports the revaluation of the rating system, he should say so. I do not think he is.

Mr. Ewing : I am sure that the Secretary of State is greatly relieved that he has quietened the bark of the Buchan bulldog. That bark is now merely a whimper. This shows how cheaply the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) can be bought. Is the Secretary of State aware that this measure might be a sop and consolation prize to the two Under-Secretaries of State for Scotland who are sitting beside him — they were both disciplined last week by their executive committees — and all right for their executive committees, but it certainly is not all right for the domestic ratepayers in Scotland who see the right hon. Gentleman as one who believes that an increase of 17 per cent. in domestic rates is acceptable?

[Mr. Ewing]

The right hon. Gentleman talks about local authorities spending above the guidelines, but is he not yet aware that the finer and deeper he cuts the guidelines the more impossible it is for local government to stay within the guidelines? They cannot keep their spending programmes within the guidelines that he has set. If the Secretary of State has a conscience, will he think black burning shame of himself for making the health of the people of Scotland pay for his bungling incompetence?

Mr. Younger: In reply to the hon. Gentleman's various points, I have never said, and do not believe, that a 17 per cent. increase is acceptable. If local authorities had been spending according to the guidelines and recommendations that we have been making for all these years, the increase through the revaluation would be only 12 per cent. Even after the Government help, that is the measure of the overspending which still runs in the system, encouraged, aided and abetted by the hon. Gentleman. We have enhanced the guidelines by £97 million this year to make it easier for local authorities to meet their targets. I should have thought that he would recognise that. I am at a bit of a loss when commenting on the hon. Gentleman's remarks, unfortunately, because I cannot accuse him of having a new scriptwriter. It is all too apparent that he writes his scripts himself.

Surrogate Motherhood

4.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (M Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I make a statement on commercial surrogacy.

Over the last few months there has been increas concern about the practice of surrogacy—that is, practice whereby a woman agrees to become pregnant w the intention that the resulting child should be handed o to another couple. This concern has related in partic to the activities of agencies which operate to prom surrogacy arrangements on a commercial basis. We a now have the results of the consultation which we initia on the Warnock report on "Human Fertilisation Embryology". Although there was some difference view about the general principle of surrogacy, there almost total agreement on the unacceptability of surrog undertaken on a commercial basis.

When the Warnock report was debated in this Ho last November I said that the Government would consi urgently whether clarification of the law on surrogacy necessary. This we have now done. It is quite clear t the question of surrogacy raises wide issues not just general principle but also about, for example, the le status of children and the involvement of professio people in facilitating surrogacy arrangements. We h concluded that it would be right to deal with th questions in the comprehensive legislation which is nee to deal with the whole range of issues raised by Warnock report.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the existing position unsatisfactory. The case of Baby Cotton demonstrated difficulties which commercial surrogacy arrangements cause and the widespread public concern about the There are almost certainly other similar cases in prosp and there is an incentive for commercial agencies increase their activities before any general legislation be brought forward.

The Government believe that commercial surrogacy in principle undesirable and the commercial agenc should be prevented from operating in this country. I sh therefore shortly be bringing forward a Bill to achieve t purpose. It will prohibit such agencies from recruiti women as surrogate mothers and from making surroga arrangements; and it will prohibit advertising of th services.

The objectives of the Bill will not be to resolve all issues in the field of surrogacy. It will, however, g rapid effect to the widespread view that this is not an a where commercial agencies should operate and will av a possible increase in the number of surroga arrangements procured by them. I hope that the House w agree that action of this kind is justified and urgent.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): We welcome Secretary of State's statement outlining his intention introduce a Bill to deal with the profit-making element surrogate parenthood. He is right to concentrate on a sh Bill which deals with this aspect of a difficult and sensit subject. It is unfortunate that one case involving la sums of money should have clouded a more thought discussion of the complicated issues. I am glad that he open the wider and more informed debate.

No one wants to see women exploited, and the genu desires of infertile parents to have a child must be thou

about carefully. When the time comes, will the Secretary of State make available to the House the results of the consultations that he has carried out following the publication of the Warnock report, because that will help the House to come to some conclusions?

I should have preferred that part of Warnock and the part dealing with research on embryos to form part of a wider package introduced comprehensively, but, having said that, I must say that we are strongly opposed to commercial agencies making money out of people's miseries and welcome the Secretary of State's statement that this aspect of the matter is to be covered.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her comments. I shall, of course, respond to her request and make the results of the consultations that followed the publication of Warnock available to the House. Perhaps I can consider the form in which they can be published and made known. Plainly, I wish to move quickly in an area where there is most anxiety. Warnock's unanimous recommendation was to ban commercial surrogacy agencies. That has been supported by virtually all the organisations which have commented on the Warnock report. That does not in any way invalidate the case for a more comprehensive Bill, but, equally, we should act quickly and certainly against this abuse.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by his hon. Friends, who will be happy to facilitate the passage of the legislation that he will bring forward shortly? He will recall that the original case that drew public atention to the matter involved an American lady. Can he comment on the international dimensions of the problem? How extensive will the legislation that he is proposing be? To what extent has he been able to obtain co-operation from other countries—in particular, the United States—in dealing with this extremely distasteful matter?

Mr. Fowler: The Bill will essentially affect arrangements, agencies and advertising in this country. In bringing forward the proposals we have been very much influenced by the Baby Cotton case and some of the things that have taken place in the United States; for example, the case of a handicapped child who was born as a result of one of these arrangements and was then rejected by the commissioning parents. One does not want that type of thing to happen in this country.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the Secretary of State aware that he will find supporters in all parts of the House for his decision to bring in this Bill? Many of us also welcome his recognition that there are some aspects of Warnock which cannot wait for a comprehensive Bill, which may be some years away. Does he believe that a contract for a surrogate mother to hand over a baby at birth can be legally enforced? If it cannot, does he feel that that issue can await a second Bill?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's general support for the intention to legislate. A contract is unenforceable, but I believe that it would be wise for the House to consider all those issues, including the legal status of the child, which is completely unsatisfactory at the moment. These issues will, I am afraid, have to be dealt with in general legislation. These are matters which are extremely complex, but none of them should invalidate the case for acting speedily where we can.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and other members of the Cabinet who have pressed so strongly for the introduction of this legislation. Many millions of people and the ethical committees of the medical profession in this country will be satisfied with this as a first step towards more consideration of Warnock. Will he cast a sympathetic eye on those who are involved in a similar tangle to that of Baby Cotton's parents and issue guidelines to those who are responsible for the safe keeping of those children when they are born? There will inevitably be cases before the legislation takes place.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her welcome for this measure. I pay tribute to her for all the work that she has done in this area, and I shall give thought to what she has said. Clearly, she recognises that the Bill is a first step. Equally, she is right in saying that there is nothing that we can do in the Bill that will affect children who are to be born in the next two or three months. However, I shall see whether there is anything further that I can usefully do in terms of guidance.

Mrs. Renée Short: (Wolverhampton, North-East): As the right hon. Gentleman has explained, surrogacy is a means of helping infertile couples to have a child. We need to bear in mind the severe complications and difficulties that that situation can create. I think that the whole House welcomes the right hon. Gentleman's statement about removing the commercial aspects of surrogacy. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware, however, that senior medical geneticists working on infertility and genetic diseases are concerned about the future of their work? Can he assure us that such work will be able to continue and will have his support?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Lady takes us into areas that are at the heart of the Government's consideration of the Warnock report. The private Member's Bill of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is also involved. We are trying to act now in a specific and limited way. I am afraid that the hon. Lady will have to wait for the more general legislation.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The right hon. Gentleman's statement will be welcomed in Northern Ireland. Can he confirm that the Bill will apply to Northern Ireland?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I confirm that the legislation will apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I should like to add to the warm welcome that this proposal has received from the House. Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the encouraging things about the proposed Bill is that it will allay public fears over an especially intense area of the Warnock controversy, and that more reasoned discussion of other areas which demand such discussion may therefore become possible?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I think that he is right.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): If a human act is intrinsically good or bad, how can the payment or non-payment for that act alter its essential nature?

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

On another plane, if all surrogacy—commercial or non-commercial—were to be made illegal, would we not avoid a great many legal and sociological problems?

Mr. Fowler: The option of acting on surrogacy in general is still open. I am sure that many hon. Members will have sympathy with what my hon. Friend has said, but I think he will agree that there is no consensus on the matter, as there is in the case of commercial surrogacy.

I am concerned to move quickly in an area of great concern, on which, as hon. Members' reactions this afternoon have suggested, there is general agreement. The aim is to prevent the present position from getting worse. I hope that, whatever aspirations hon. Members may have about the final form of the legislation, they will support this limited but valuable Bill.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not true that the surrogate service which the Secretary of State is illegalising will still be available to any British national who goes to the United States or to the EEC? Should not the Government introduce some disincentive to those who would wish to use that service? The right hon. Gentleman could ensure that there was no possibility of patriating children who were the product of a surrogate relationship.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman takes us a long way from the intention of the Bill. For one thing, British law cannot apply in the United States, and there is no sense in thinking that it can.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I warmly welcome the Bill and the speed with which it is being introduced. My right hon. Friend has spoken of his intention eventually to introduce comprehensive legislation on the Warnock report. When is such legislation likely to appear before the House, and does my right hon. Friend feel in any way inhibited by the fact that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill is now under consideration?

Mr. Fowler: I do not feel inhibited by that Bill, but clearly the House's decision on it will affect the final form of the legislation which the Government put before the House.

The Government intend to introduce a comprehensive Bill dealing with the wider issues considered by Warnock. I believe that that is what the House would wish us to do. I cannot at this stage give a commitment about timing, but the Government wish to introduce such a Bill as soon as they possibly can.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement about the abolition of the commercial market in surrogacy, but the question of the legal status of children born in surrogacy, and other major issues in the Warnock report, remain to be considered. I hope that the comprehensive Bill will appear sooner rather than later. Right hon. and hon. Members seem to assume that it will be years before we have a comprehensive Bill which legislates in detail. I would be very disappointed if we had to wait for years. We should act now, sensibly and comprehensively, but as a matter of urgency, on all the issues in the Warnock report.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree that we should act sooner rather than later. The Government are acting with exceptional speed in this matter. We debated Warnock only last November and I now propose to introduce legislation on part of it, which seems to be generall welcome to both sides of the House. Consultation with a the interested parties has taken place. The Governme cannot be accused of delay.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I joi in the general welcome given to the statement and to th Bill when it appears? However, does my right hon. Frien agree that however much we may want to assuage th longing of childless couples for a child, the nation has bee deeply affronted by the idea that this could be done b offering an embryo or a foetus, or the pregnancy service of a stranger, through a commercial agency for money We are heartily glad to see that one of those practices promptly to be banned. When can we expect legislatio on the others?

Mr. Fowler: I have just answered my hon. Friend' final point. I entirely agree that is is unacceptable to se children or to charge for pregnancy. The risk exploitation is one of the reasons why the Government ar acting with such speed.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): As there is n Scottish Office Minister on the Bench, can the Secretar of State assure us that his legislation will apply t Scotland, which has a different legal system?

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr Campbell-Savours) referred to the difficulties of ensurin that people do not go to the United States for this service Is there not a case for consulting Ministers in the EEC wit a view to reaching an appropriate agreement?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, the Bill will apply to Scotland, shall consider whether the hon. Gentleman's second poin can be taken further.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I welcome my righ hon. Friend's response, but I hope that he will resist th invitation from my hon. Friend the Member for Hornse and Wood Green (Sir H. Ross) to include non-commercia surrogacy. There would be no general support for that.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most effectiv way of stopping the operation of commercial surrogac agencies is to ensure that the contracts are unenforceable that no money can be required to be paid under suc contracts, and that if money has been paid it i recoverable?

Mr. Fowler: I shall consider my hon. Friend's latte point. I have sympathy with his general argument, but Bill which prevents commercial or fee-charging agencie from recruiting surrogate mothers and making surrogac arrangements will have an impact on the problem whic my hon. Friend and I want to tackle. I realise that th inclusion of non-commercial surrogacy would not b acceptable to all. It has deliberately not been included i the Bill, which depends on agreement on both sides of th House to achieve progress. We do not have much time i which to get the Bill through.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My right hon Friend has made it clear that the Bill will make commercia agencies illegal. Will it also be illegal for individuals t be surrogate mothers for gain? Would it be possible at th same time to make illegal the implantation of huma embryos in animals?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend's latter question goe much wider than the Bill. The Bill will do three thing

—prevent commercial or fee-charging agencies from recruiting surrogate mothers, ban agencies and individuals from advertising, and create penalties for offences. It is a limited but valid measure.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread support for his categorical assertion that this is a first step? When does he hope the Bill will be on the statutue book? Can he assure us that the penalties laid down by the Bill will be sufficient to deter those who would traffic in human beings?

Mr. Fowler: I strongly hope so. I hope that I shall be able to introduce the Bill before Easter—in the next week or so. The message that people will take from this is that the Government are determined to act against such agencies. I think that that message will be understood.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I should like to add my thanks and that of my constituents for what my right hon. Friend has done and his speedy reaction. He said that the Bill was a first step. As this is a holding operation, and in view of anxiety expressed in the House about experiments on embryos, will my right hon. Friend consider giving a fair wind to the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell)?

Mr. Fowler: There are various views on that. The Government are neutral. I am not a member of the Committee considering the right hon. Gentleman's Bill, but it seems that he is well able to look after himself and he appears to be making progress in Committee.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Although I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement, does he agree that it flows from several of the questions that have been asked today that many complex issues in the Warnock report are interrelated and that piecemeal legislation is undesirable? Does he have any plans for further interim legislation, or will the next step be a comprehensive Bill?

Mr. Fowler: The next stage must be comprehensive legislation. However, I do not regard this as piecemeal but as action against a well-defined evil. Most right hon. and hon. Members regard it as such. The Bill does not in any way invalidate the case for comprehensive legislation, and the Government will continue to prepare it.

Coal Industry Dispute

5.3 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the current situation in the west Fife and central Scotland coalfields."

It is fairly apparent to some eyes that the miners' strike is over. That is not the case in west Fife and central Scotland where the miners are persisting in staying out, principally because they feel that the National Coal Board is being unfair.

During Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday, the Prime Minister gave me the impression that she thought that the NCB was right not to re-engage miners who had been convicted of serious criminal acts and dismissed from work. We must define what is meant by "serious criminal acts." I should like to illustrate my argument by describing acts for which men in my constituency have been sacked. The NCB director in Scotland, Mr. Albert Wheeler, says that there can be no further consideration of their sackings. His attitude is vindictive and spiteful.

George Wallace was convicted of a breach of the peace offence, sentenced to six months with good behaviour, and sacked. Mr. David Carruthers, who has served 30 years in the mining industry and never been in trouble, was convicted of a breach of the peace offence and fined £25. He has been dismissed. Robert Young was convicted of a breach of the peace offence and fined £75. He has been dismissed. His gross misconduct occurred on or about 7 June at Cartmore opencast mine—nothing to do with NCB property. Such sackings show that the mining industry in Scotland is being managed vindictively and spitefully. The churches in Scotland have protested to the Coal Board, and Dunfermline district council has written to it saying that it deplores the attitude of the director of the NCB in Scotland. That was the council's unanimous view.

I recently spent half of an afternoon pleading with the National Coal Board not to use non-union buses to convey miners to work, but it persisted. That has merely rubbed salt into the wounds and is another example of its spiteful and vindictive attitude.

Willie Bell, who has recently retired as manager of the Solsgirth mine, in an article in *The Scotsman* this week, said:

"Long ago in my management career, I learned that a manager can't produce coal by himself. If you can't get the backing of the labour force you may as well forget it."

It appears that the NCB in Scotland has not read or digested that article. Mr. Bell's comments back up the call of Labour Members of Parliament and others for a public inquiry into the operations of the NCB in Scotland. I am pleading for an opportunity to discuss this issue. If not, I cannot be responsible for the repercussions in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

[Mr. Speaker]

"the current situation in the west Fife and central Scotland coalfields."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

There is now a further application under Standing Order No. 10.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order afterwards.

Mr. Cormack: My point of order is relevant now.

Mr. Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Cormack: Under the terms of Standing Order No. 10, a debate cannot be granted unless 40 hon. Members are present in the Chamber. Would you consider referring the Standing Order to the Procedure Committee so that the time of the House is not wasted, because if there are not 40 hon. Members present, even if you grant leave, a debate cannot take place.

Mr. Speaker: I have not granted the application. It is not for me to refer the matter to the Procedure Committee. If the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about it, he is free to do so himself. I shall now take the further application under Standing Order No. 10.

Hackney Rates (High Court Application)

5.9 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South Shoreditch): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjourn of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, fo purpose of discussing a specific and important matte should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the response of the Department of the Environment declaration of Mr. Justice Mann concerning Hackney's to set a rate."

On Tuesday of this week, Mr. Justice Mann in the Court granted interim relief to a Hackney resident a Hackney council in respect of its stated intention not a rate this evening. He ruled that Hackney has a du make a rate for the year commencing 1 April; that it c make a rate contrary to the Rates Act 1984; that m forwarded by tenants in respect of rates after 1 cannot be used until a rate has been fixed; and Hackney cannot borrow against expected revenue u lawful rate has been fixed for 1985-86.

The matter is the more specific and quite extraord because the response of the Secretary of State fo Environment has been to enter into negotiations wit resident who made the ex parte application to Mr. J Mann in the High Court. I have a letter in my posse from the resident who made the ex parte application leader of the Liberal party in Hackney and I shall briefly from it, because it shows how specific, urgen important the matter is:

."You will be interested to learn that the Solicitor Department of the Environment telephoned today to a copies of the papers in this case. He told me that the P Office had evinced an interest. He also said that if the L Group were put in a position where they had to make a b and upon getting all the information they needed to do so found that there was a defined need for further assistance in respect of Housing repairs) a properly evidenced appli to the Secretary of State would undoubtedly result in f funding being made available."

The person who was party to the application was Fleming, who stood as an SDP candidate in a loca election last Thursday and was defeated.

The matter is important for two reasons. First, important because it is a constitutional outrage a contempt of Parliament, as well as an insult to the p of Hackney, for the Secretary of State to enter negotiations with a resident who is not a Member o House or a member of the Hackney borough council. it is an outrage for the Secretary of State fo Environment to offer moneys to an individual w nothing to do with the Hackney borough council.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): T an outrage.

Mr. Sedgemore: I do not accept that this is an out If the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South Cormack) would only listen, he might learn someth

It is also important because there are a number of councils affected by this ruling, which totally change law in respect of rate capping. It is urgent because I been told by the Hackney council today that, if this r stands, on 1 April Hackney council will not be able t any wages or salaries or to provide any services fo people of Hackney. That means that we are within weeks of the breakdown of local government in Hac

I do not want to be dramatic or to exaggerate, but it means that we shall get not only hardship but disorder and rioting in the streets, and the Secretary of State for the Environment is going to have to come to this House with emergency legislation. I believe that we should be debating today the nature of that emergency legislation before the constitutional crisis hits us.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the response of the Department of the Environment to the declaration of Mr. Justice Mann regarding Hackney's refusal to set a rate."

I have to give him the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Northern Ireland (Local Elections)

5.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

The main and immediate purpose of this draft order is to apply to local government elections in Northern Ireland provisions corresponding to sections 1 to 3 of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985. Sections 1 and 2 of that Act provide for voters at parliamentary elections in the Province to produce a specified document in order to receive a ballot paper, and list the documents which are acceptable for that purpose. Section 3 of the Act creates a new electoral offence in respect of unlawful possession of specified documents and confers appropriate powers on the police to deal with this and related offences.

As hon. Members are aware, the Government have also decided to take this legislative opportunity to revise the existing body of local elections rules for Northern Ireland. These are set out in schedule 5 to the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962, as substituted by schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland (Local Elections) Order 1977. The new rules, which form the bulk of the draft order before us tonight, have the general effect of aligning the procedures at local elections more closely with those prescribed for parliamentary elections in the Representation of the People Act 1983.

In addition, the draft order provides for the establishment, for the first time, of a standing list for absent voters in local elections in Northern Ireland. This course of action has for some time been advocated by those who take a close interest in electoral matters in the Province, and in particular by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

It may assist the House if I now describe the main provisions of the draft order in slightly greater detail. A number of hon. Members will of course be familiar with some of the issues from our debates last year on the Bill which became the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985. I have also written to the leaders of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland setting out the main features of the draft order.

Article 3 disapplies the substance of the Northern Ireland (Local Elections) Order 1977, which this order replaces. The remaining provisions of the 1977 order—article 3 and schedule 1—deal with district electoral areas and have been superseded by the District Electoral Areas (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which the House debated in January and which comes into force on 15 May this year, when the 1977 order will be revoked.

Article 4 of the draft order, together with schedule 1 to the order, substitutes the new election rules in the schedule for those in schedule 5 to the 1962 Act. Many of the rules, as might be expected, replicate their predecessors in terms of their purpose and practical effect, though not necessarily in their precise drafting or arrangement within the schedule. The significant changes are as follows.

Rule 1 of schedule 1 extends polling hours at local elections, which will now be from seven in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. Previously, as hon. Members from Northern Ireland are aware, polling was from 8 am to 8 pm. The additional time will on all occasions be valuable and should prove particularly useful at the forthcoming district

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

council elections in May, when voters and electoral staff will be familiarising themselves with the new voting procedures designed to curb personation. Those who took part in the debates on the previous order will remember the representations made by, in particular, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) urging us to extend the polling hours at elections in the Province.

Rule 3 provides that in these rules the term "returning officer" means the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, or a deputy returning officer authorised to act under the Chief Electoral Officer's supervision. The purpose of this rule, and of its application throughout the schedule, is to make it clear that the Chief Electoral Officer has sole responsibility for the proper and efficient conduct of all aspects of local elections, as he does for all other elections in Northern Ireland.

Rule 25 provides that the roll card shall be in the form shown on the appendix in form 6—in other words, that the back of the card shall list the specified documents and make clear the requirement to produce one such document in order to obtain a ballot paper. I should perhaps add that this modification of the poll card is intended largely as an aide memoire for electors. The Government's major publicity campaign to emphasise the need for voters to possess a specified document — and to obtain one quickly if they need to do so—is planned to begin some two months before polling day. Indeed, the delivery of leaflets to households in Northern Ireland has already begun. I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer proposes to reinforce the Government's own publicity campaign with his own public information programme in the run-up to the election. I echo the hope that I expressed in the debate on the earlier order, that political parties, in their own campaigns, will reinforce the work both of the Government and of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Rule 34 is the rule which applies to local government elections the provisions of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 concerning the production of specified documents. The House rightly devoted considerable time and thought during the passage of the elections Bill to both the principle of seeking to defeat organised electoral malpractice by means of this voting requirement, and to the composition of the list of documents. I am only too aware that some right hon. and hon. Members may remain critical or sceptical of the conclusions of Parliament as embodied in the resulting Act, but, having endorsed the measures in relation to parliamentary elections, I believe that the House should support their application to local elections. As I made clear during our debates on the principal Bill, it has always been the Government's aim to have the anti-personation provisions in force for the district council elections in May, and that is what this order, if approved, will achieve.

Finally, as regards the significant changes to the rules, I draw the attention of the House to the effect of rule 41 and the hours of polling set out in rule 1. They follow the Representation of the People Act 1983 in prohibiting the issue of ballot papers after the close of poll. This contrasts with rule 46 in schedule 5 to the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 which allowed people present in the polling station at that time to remain there to apply for a ballot paper and cast their vote. It was, in a sense, a sort of electoral drinking-up time, which encouraged minute crowding of the polling station, some of whic least was deliberate and designed to facilitate elec abuse.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Will Minister clarify that point by telling me whether he m inside the room where the booths are, or inside the sch

Mr. Scott: Inside the polling station as defined, w would normally be within the school. However, if building were divided in any way between diffe polling stations, it would be within the boundary of particular polling station.

Mr. Ross: I am sorry to rise again, but my experi is that whenever the 10 o'clock or 8 o'clock dead came, the policeman, on the instructions of the presi officer within that room, closed and locked the d Those who were inside the door of that room were allowed to vote. Is the Minister now saying that ur those people have their polling paper in their hand will not be allowed to cast a vote, although they are in the locked room?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman is seeking to cla what will happen if Parliament approves the order an becomes law, I should tell him that at 10 o'clock, at close of poll, the shutters will come down and no o ballot papers will be issued, whatever the phys situation of someone claiming to vote.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Is the Mini aware of the repercussions of that decision? Government may have felt it possible that disorder wo break out if the doors were closed at 10 o'clock and peo outside felt that they were disfranchised, but if they w in the polling station and refused a vote, I can assure hon. Gentleman that, if not a riot, there would considerable upheaval in the polling station by peo being refused a vote.

Mr. Scott: In the first place, we have extended polling hours by some three hours, so there should be difficulty for genuine electors to get to the poll in g time. Secondly, I am concerned more with the possibi of disorder being used for electoral abuse, which will happen, because no further ballot papers will be issu than with the possibility of disorder for its own sake, w which I am sure the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be a to cope.

I should like to return to the main body of order——

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): The Mini has not explained why he has changed the system.

Mr. Scott: To bring it into line—which members the right hon. Gentleman's party frequently urge upon —with arrangements on this side of the water, in first place, and, secondly, to counter the possibility the flooding into the polling station just before the cl of poll can be used as a cover for electoral malpractic one sort or another. On both those grounds, the chang justifiable. It is an important part of the order, particula against the background of having extended the poll hours by some three hours for this and subsequ elections.

I should like to refer to other provisions of the or beyond those which, in the view of the Governmen

least, are the most significant. Article 5 provides that local elections shall take place on the basis of district electoral areas, as designated by an Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. As I said earlier, the relevant order comes into force on 15 May.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Will the Minister confirm that the rather unusual form of that article, in that it does not specify the particular Order in Council, is due to the concurrence of the procedure for making that order with the procedure for dealing with this order?

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman is correct in that assumption.

Article 6 makes fresh provision for absent voting at local government elections, to which the grounds for entitlement are similar to those for local electors in Great Britain under the Representation of the People Act 1983. In particular, under paragraph (2) of part I of schedule 2, all local electors who are also on the standing list for absent voters at parliamentary elections will now be entitled to apply for absent voting facilities for an indefinite period at local elections.

I would like at this point to clarify the practical relationship between those two lists—the one for party election, and the other for local elections. The draft order does not provide for the automatic transfer of a voter's name from the existing parliamentary list to the local list, because if it did some voters who have in the past voted in person in local elections might find themselves unexpectedly required to vote by post or by proxy at local elections. On the other hand, it is clear as a matter of common sense that most people entitled to an indefinite absent vote will wish to exercise that right in both local and parliamentary elections. The best solution therefore seems to be an administrative one. Once the order is made, the Chief Electoral Officer will write to all those who are on the standing list for parliamentary elections to ask them if they wish to be entered on the equivalent list for local elections. He also intends to provide future applicants with a form under both this order and the Representation of the People Act, so that in practice they will be entered on both standing lists.

Mr. William Ross: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister again. Can he tell us what the position is in regard to EC elections?

Mr. Scott: Perhaps I can cover that point in my winding-up speech, after other points have been raised.

Paragraph (4) of part I of schedule 2 provides that applications for absent voting rights at a particular local election shall be made to the Chief Electoral Officer. Under schedule 5 to the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 such applications were made to clerks of district councils in their capacity as deputy returning officers. I want to emphasise to the House that the new arrangements imply no criticism whatsoever of the way in which clerks of the council have discharged that function in the past, or could be expected to do in the future. The reason for the change is simply that we believe it makes good organisational sense to vest responsibility for all electoral matters in one clearly designated office. That argument gains added force with the introduction of a standing list of absent voters at local elections. It would be ineffective and confusing for voters to have to apply to one authority if they required an absent vote for a particular election only, and to a separate authority if they sought the facility on a continuing basis.

Article 7 reaffirms the existing legal requirement that polling in an election year shall be held on the third Wednesday in May. Article 8 extends from three to six months the time within which the Chief Electoral Officer must submit an account of electoral expenses to district councils, and also increases from 21 to 42 days the period in which claims can be made against the returning officer. Article 9 increases the limit on candidates' expenses to £135 plus an additional 2·8p for every elector on the register. The new rates reflect the change in the value of money since they were last raised in February 1981.

Article 10 deals with costs which may be charged for inspection of certain election documents, and article 11 retains the existing right of candidates in Northern Ireland to send their election addresses post-free — not a privilege which exists on this side of the water, but one which is highly valued in the Province.

Article 12 abolishes the candidates' deposit for local elections, which has long been an anomaly between Northern Ireland practice and that in the rest of the United Kingdom. Article 13 disapplies for the purposes of local elections a provision which applied only in Northern Ireland whereby a person wrongly charged with personation could claim compensation not exceeding £10. In future any claim can be pursued in the ordinary way through the civil courts as at parliamentary elections.

Article 14 extends certain voting offences in the 1962 Act. More importantly, article 15 replicates the provisions of section 3 of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985. These create an offence relating to the possession of specified documents either on polling day or the day preceding it, and a related offence of obstruction or concealment. The powers conferred on the Royal Ulster Constabulary by this article, taken in conjunction with the specified document requirement itself, constitute in our view the most effective available strategy for safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process. The remaining three articles make consequential amendments to earlier legislation.

I apologise for the fact that this has necessarily been a rather lengthy and technical description of a draft order which exhibits both these characteristics in abundance. As I said earlier, however, the order seeks to do only two things; first, to bring to bear at local government elections in the Province the measures which Parliament has already agreed should apply at elections to this House; and, secondly, to bring the generality of local elections rules more closely into line with those governing parliamentary elections. I believe that these are both desirable objectives and that this draft order, if approved, will achieve them, in good time for the district council elections on 15 May. I comment the order to the House.

5.31 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The Minister has just said that the order does only two things. He would be mistaken if he supposed that the attitude of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the order derives from either of those two things or classes of things with which his speech was entirely concerned. We were, of course, opposed, as he well knows and remembers, to the Northern Ireland electoral measure of the current Session, but it would not be reasonable to argue that the law for local elections

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

should be in that respect any more than avoidably in other respects different from the electoral law applying to parliamentary elections. Nor—he will not be surprised by this—are we averse to any steps which continue to approximate the local government electoral procedure to the parliamentary, or to eliminate unjustified differentiation between the operation of electoral law at local elections in Northern Ireland and on this side of the water. Although they will be increased further when the Representation of the People Act 1985 comes into force, the extension of the facilities for absent voting and the application of a standard list of absent voters are features in the order which we welcome.

The Minister was not entirely accurate in suggesting that those are the only two things which the order does. It does something else which is of great importance and which is unacceptable to my right hon. and hon. Friends and to myself, for it is this order which perpetuates the application to local government elections of a system of proportional representation. Proportional representation was foisted upon the Province in 1972 by an order under the misrule of Lord Whitelaw. That being a year in which there was a plethora of orders relating to Northern Ireland, it was not seriously debated or considered by the House. In consequence, the House never had a proper, separate and specific debate upon the principle of proportional representation, to the application of which to one part of the United Kingdom it was assenting by accepting the order at that time.

When proportional representation was introduced, it was described as experimental. If it was experimental, there is no doubt what the result of the experiment was. It was a result which was predicted and understood by those, hitherto in the large majority in the House, who have resisted the application of proportional representation to the rest of the kingdom.

The Government, with the general approval of the House, have recently placed much emphasis upon the importance of the integrity of the electoral process in Northern Ireland. That integrity is severely damaged by the principle of proportional representation itself. One of the outstanding consequences of proportional representation is that it disjoins the elected person from the specific body of electors by whom he was elected. There can be no part of the United Kingdom where that disjunction is more undesirable than it is in Northern Ireland. Nowhere else in the kingdom is it more desirable that electors should look to one representative as the person, whatever his politics or religion, who is responsible to them as their representative. That is, of course, of overwhelming importance parliamentarily and would be lost if ever we introduced this pernicious system into parliamentary government, but it is of no small importance in local government which is based upon the paradigm of parliamentary representation.

In local government it is of great importance that those who live in a ward should know to what person they should look, irrespective of party or other affiliation, to deal with grievances which they may have in respect of the operation of the administration of that local authority. Under proportional representation, there can be no such identification of an elected person with electors and no such congruence of responsibility.

Indeed, the proportional system does more t
because it creates of necessity, in order to be
electoral areas in which the natural and local in
the electorate differ from one part of the district
area to the other, so that the whole significance
in local government as an area small enough
common interests which will be represented by th
representative is destroyed by proportional repres

In the creation of district electoral areas in pa
constituency, for example, one lumps togethe
parts of towns and suburbs with deep rural area
interests and concerns may well be sharply differ
All the people in that district electoral area wi
menu card of representatives from whom to choo
will not choose among those representatives on th
that any one of them is identified with that area;
choose on the ground of politics, which is ex
ground on which our electoral system otherwise d
electors and those elected from viewing their
responsibilities.

If the object is to build up confidence in the
of the electoral process — words and phras
frequently during the earlier debate—we could
further in the opposite direction than by the proces
was experimented with in the 1973 electi
proportional representation. That process was re
by the 1977 order, which the present order repla

I expect that in preparing himself for this deb
Minister will have read again the debate that took
23 February 1977, when the earlier order was be
House. It was not a very long debate, but it
reading. It was made clear that the question of prop
representation, as applied to local government ele
Northern Ireland, was at issue in that order. The
in charge at the time was the then hon. Men
Birmingham, Northfield, Mr. Ray Carter, w
common with all those who have served in the N
Ireland Department of the Environment—I ment
Department, because it was the one with which
particularly concerned — paid great attention
showed great alacrity in dealing with, the dutie
office. All those who have so served have adapt
interests and administration to the needs, as they
them, of those for whom they are responsible.

In the course of that debate, the then Minister
that the acceptability or otherwise of the order wa
to turn upon the acceptability or otherwise of the p
of proportional representation. In that debate I
reference that is pertinent to this debate. I said:

"I give warning that my right hon. Friends and I will
to complain of this system, which we are unhappily perp
tonight, until it is removed by a further order".

Tonight we are presented with a further order
only does not remove that system but repe
reinforces the offence. Therefore, the Government
say that they are taken by surprise when I point
we will not approve the order and thereby assen
imposition of an abominable system upon the pe
Northern Ireland which would not be acceptable f
government, or for other purposes, to the electorat
remaining part of the United Kingdom.

In that distant year of 1977, the Minister's pred
referred to my remarks and said:

"The right hon. Member for Down, South conclude
wide-ranging criticism of the PR system and suggested
might come back at some time in the future with

presumably in another stage of the decompression procedure, bringing Northern Ireland back into line with the rest of the United Kingdom."

He continued in prophetic mood:

"I am afraid I cannot give the right hon. Member a time, place or date for such an event, but with his persistence and that of his colleagues, perhaps such a Bill may one day come about." —[*Official Report*, 23 February 1977; Vol. 926 c. 1581, 1586.]

During this Session, we have witnessed progress in that direction. Not so many days ago, we witnessed the Government's acceptance, in the teeth of the wishes of the Northern Ireland Office, of the principle put forward so firmly by the Opposition, that the electors of Northern Ireland are entitled to be governed under the same electoral laws as those in the rest of the United Kingdom. It has been an important Session in that respect, in that all sides of the House have joined together in establishing that as a principle. Thus, whatever contradictions a Government may be guilty of in future—as they are in this order—the principle has at any rate been accepted by the House as a whole.

As my eye falls upon the date of February 1977 and upon the column heads for that debate, I recall that within a few weeks of those prescient remarks by Ray Carter, the House and all elements of it agreed that Northern Ireland should be equally represented together with the rest of the kingdom, and on the same scale in the House. Lo and behold, after a lapse of years, that came about. Tonight, I reaffirm what I said in 1977 with a conviction that is strengthened by the preceding debates on the Representation of the People Bill in this Session, that the day will come when the House will concede to Northern Ireland in electoral law that parity with the rest of the United Kingdom which it is now denied.

Meanwhile, it remains for those who represent Northern Ireland constituencies to repudiate the breach of the general principle, and to draw a lesson, which should be an instructive warning to those representing constituencies in other parts of the United Kingdom, against the folly of imagining that, by superseding our one-for-one electoral system and our unambiguous identification with the constituency of the elected person, we would do anything but damage to the electoral integrity of the process upon which the esteem and power of the House depends.

We shall endeavour to defeat the order tonight, not for the aspects to which the Minister referred but for what it does, and for the error that it repeats.

5.46 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The backcloth to the order is that the people of Northern Ireland will be involved in elections that are very different from other elections in which candidates have stood. They will find themselves with new ward boundaries, with district electoral areas that have been regrouped, and with changes in the identification that is required before a vote can be given to any elector. In addition, I know that, certainly around the Belfast area, there are some extra and different polling stations. Thus, there will be considerable confusion.

Against that backcloth, I welcome the fact that the Minister has agreed that the hours should be lengthened. I suspect that my election workers will not be so grateful, but such a lengthening of hours is necessary because of the obvious delay that will arise.

As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said, the order carries on the process of proportional representation by single transferable vote in multi-Member constituencies. I should make it clear from the outset that I do not oppose proportional representation for the sake of it. I believe that representation should be as near as possible proportional to the votes that are cast. But I do not believe in a system of STV in multi-Member constituencies.

One of the most essential ingredients of representation is that the elected representative should be clearly identified with, and clearly identifiable by, his constituents. Once one has a number of representatives —especially if they are from different parties—as one esteemed hon. Member has pointed out:

"politics is riven by a parochialism made essential by the fact that each one of five Members is vying to persuade the same set of constituents that he alone holds the key to their interest and that he is capable of being even more parochial than the next Member."

Those words were uttered on 14 February 1985. The same hon. Member referred to

"the manifest failures and inadequacies of proportional representation in so many countries"

and said:

"in truth it is a negation of democracy."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 581-83.]

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department made that accurate assessment of proportional representation by the single transferable vote in multi-Member constitutiencies.

Having been present in the House on that occasion—the Secretary of State will be pleased to hear—I heard the Minister utter those words, and I left the Chamber with great hope that when the local elections order was printed, I should find that a new system of voting was to be introduced for Northern Ireland district council elections.

I was shocked to discover that the Government had a double standard, one for the people of Northern Ireland and another for those on this side of the Irish sea. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate, he will at least attempt to justify the double standard of bringing to Northern Ireland what his colleague, speaking from the same Dispatch box, called a negation of democracy.

When dealing with that, he might care to explain why he did not do what many in Northern Ireland, especially in local government, advised him to do, and introduce in the order a provision dealing with the nomination of candidates to require any candidate standing in the 1985 local government elections to sign a pledge that he was opposed to violence.

Had the Minister been prepared to do that, he could to some extent have avoided many of the horrific consequences that we shall witness in local government after May of this year. It is important for him to be aware that, on the best evidence that the psephologists can present, we are likely to have about 60 IRA men in council chambers. It is likely that no fewer than three, and probably five or six, councils will be held on the controlling votes of IRA members. In one or two, or even more, of those councils it is likely that there will be an IRA front man as the mayor or chairman of the council.

The Minster has allowed Northern Ireland to drift into that situation by refusing to follow the logic of Government decisions in the past, when they have rightly refused to meet dlegations containing Sinn Fein members.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

It was logical for the Government to have taken that decision. It was logical for us to expect that steps would be taken to ensure that we in Northern Ireland who must sit in local government would not have to do that which he and his colleagues refused to do, and sit down with Sinn Fein members.

The difficulties that are likely to occur must have come home to the Government when, after the tragic events of Newry, as Belfast local authority members stood for one minute in silence in memory of the gallant members of the RUC and UDR who had been killed, the Sinn Fein member sat throughout and refused to get to his feet. That was a passive action on the part of Sinn Fein, whereas in the coming months the activities of Sinn Fein in local government are likely to increase as their numbers are replenished in district councils.

This order presented the Minister with an excellent opportunity to insert a requirement that, when signing a nomination paper, a candidate must state his opposition to violence. It is clear that Sinn Fein believes in violence. Indeed, its members have publicly stated that they support it. They would have been seen, had they been prepared to sign such a paper, to be dishonest. I do not believe that they would have stood under those circumstances.

The Minister refused to accept the logic of banning Sinn Fein. Having failed to do that, this order presented him with an opportunity at least to make an effort to stop Sinn Fein from getting into the councils, so allowing those representatives of the Nationalist community who abhor violence to take their places in district councils and speak for their electorates in Northern Ireland.

I believe that violent acts will be seen in district councils after May. Local government will never be the same again because of the presence of Sinn Fein. There will be a degree of intolerance that even the most hardened council in Northern Ireland has not seen before. It is unlikely that the coming term of office will expire without there being violence in council chambers, especially at emotive times such as when deaths occur in the community.

I wish to consider the procedures in the order flowing directly from the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985. I do not intend to rehearse the opposition that I and other hon. Members expressed when that measure was going through the House. It is on the statute book and I must accept it.

However, I now have an opportunity to speak again on that subject. I shall do so only to the extent of asking the Minister to underline the reason that he gave for allowing the presiding officer or clerk in a polling station to assess for himself—if he had personal knowledge of the person appearing before him, even if the document which that person produced did not clearly identify the person—whether to allow the vote.

Paragraph 34(3) of the order states that the presiding officer or clerk

"shall deliver a ballot paper . . . unless the . . . document raises a reasonable doubt as to whether the voter is the elector . . . he represents himself to be."

That, at first sight, appears to mean that if the document presented to the presiding officer or clerk contains a different name or address from that on the electoral register, a doubt will have been raised and the vote will not be permitted.

However, when the 1985 Act was going through Parliament, the Minister gave us to understand that if the presiding officer or clerk knew the person appearing before him to be the person on the electoral register—despite the fact that the document did not verify that—he could, acting on his own knowledge, hand over a ballot paper.

I urge that the degree of flexibility that that permits be impressed on presiding officers and their clerks at polling stations so that not only can delay be avoided but people are not unjustly disfranchised, especially when the presiding officer or clerk knows the person to be the person on the electoral register.

The Minister referred to the 10 pm deadline and said that would it bring us into line with the rest of the United Kingdom. Some people will accept that as sufficient reason for the deadline. The fact that almost everything else in the order makes us different from the rest of the United Kingdom did not seem to trouble him. From my experience of polling stations—having stood in five or six elections—I believe that it is rare, in the closing moments of an election, not to have people rushing in to cast their votes.

I have often seen queues at polling stations as polling closes, whether at 8 o'clock or 10 o'clock at night, because people often leave voting to the last moment. On one occasion the queues were both inside and outside the polling station. I can imagine what would happen if a presiding officer put his hand over the ballot box and said, "Nobody else can vote." The least that he could expect would be verbal abuse from a room full of potential voters. More likely, disorder would occur. Certainly it would in west Belfast.

The Minister said that existing legislation was sufficient to deal positively with personation. That should be enough without suggesting that not only should we stop people outside the polling station from voting, but people inside who have already been handed a ballot paper.

I have reservations about deposit levels at any election. I do not like a person who cannot afford a large deposit being stopped from standing. He might be a worthy candidate, but might not have the support of a wealthy political party. However, at local level, when there is free postage, it would be unwise to remove the meagre deposit required at present. I remember a candidate in Northern Ireland standing for election when he knew that he had not the slightest chance of winning and that he would lose his deposit. He stood simply to advertise his business.

I fear that candidates will put their names forward in local elections merely to advertise their business. It will cost them nothing. The business will be drawn to the attention of every elector who goes to the ballot box. Everyone who reads the local newspaper will read about the election and the business will be advertised for nothing. The £15 deposit would at least dissuade some prople from standing as candidates. Advertising should not be permitted, but it has been permitted because it is hard for an electoral officer to prove that a person's name is put forward to enable him to advertise.

Unfortunately, the order cannot be amended, but I ask the Minister to consider my comments so that in future we do not allow free advertising by local candidates in Northern Ireland elections. If people want to advertise they must pay for it. If they want to stand for election and have some chance of success they should not worry about a meagre £15 deposit.

6.3 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I interrupted the Minister and asked him about the standing list for EEC elections. He promised to make inquiries. Will he also inquire about the standing list for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections to see whether we can group them together so that we do not have the hassle experienced in the past?

The Minister spoke about closing the doors of polling stations. I am not sure what he means by a polling station. Article 22 makes it clear that he was talking about individual polling boxes. The article says:

"One or more polling stations may be provided in the same room."

That is not what the ordinary man or woman regards as a polling station. The ordinary party workers in Northern Ireland, including myself, regard the polling station as the school where polling takes place.

The rooms in the school are locked when the deadline falls and the people inside the rooms are allowed to vote. If a person arrives one second after the key turns in the lock, he has had it. If the Minister is saying that those already inside will be prevented from voting, that is a different kettle of fish. I believe that he was telling the House and the people in Northern Ireland that even if a person is inside the locked room he will not be able to vote.

I appreciate the difficulty, and I understand the fear that large numbers might crowd in at the last minute, but I believe that that fear is ill-founded. If there is to be any misappropriation of votes, it will be in the middle of the big rush, which in Northern Ireland usually occurs in the evening between 5.30 and 8. That is when most people in Northern Ireland, particularly in the towns and villages, go to vote.

I make my comments in the knowledge that not one jot or tittle of the Order will be altered. I have several questions to ask before I deal with my views about proportional representation.

An extension of time is provided, from three months to six months, and from 21 days to 42 days. The Minister mentioned that, but he did not give the reasons for the extension. Will he explain why the times are being extended? I am aware of past problems.

Mr. Scott: The time limits were set down in the 1962 order, when the returning officer was the local district clerk. Since 1972 the returning officer has been the Chief Electoral Officer. The time limits in the 1962 order for a more local operation are not adequate for the Chief Electoral Officer to carry out his duties, and we are therefore extending the limits.

Mr. Ross: I thank the Minister for that explanation. Will the local council clerks act as the local electoral officers as they always have, or will the duties be carried out by the deputy electoral officers? That should be cleared up.

Article 27(2) mentions 5 pm in relation to the appointment of agents by candidates. The article suggests that it is possible to make a change if an agent is unable to be present. If an agent becomes ill, will the 5 pm deadline stand or will it be possible to appoint someone after that time? This is a matter that should be examined. We want to be up to date when dealing with the technicalities of getting the elections off the ground.

Article 30(2)(*b*) states that a person may be removed from a polling station

"by the presiding officer's order . . . by a constable . . . or by any other person authorised in writing by the returning officer to remove him".

Whom does the Minister have in mind? Is he suggesting that other members of the security forces who are present at the polling station can take that action if it is desirable or necessary? The provision is so loosely written that one has no idea who would have such authority.

Article 48(3) sets out in essence the first-past-the-post principle, which will be used when only one vacancy is to be filled. I raised that matter during previous debates and said that in effect that meant that we would have a first-past-the-post system at by-elections where only one seat was to be filled. The Minister disagreed with me. Although he was correct because of the way in which I put it, it is accurate to say that it is a first-past-the-post election by the exhaustive voting system because one of the candidates must gain more than 50 per cent. of the votes. Exactly the same result would probably be reached if the individuals were fighting on a simple majority electoral system. The Minister shakes his head, but I should like to know on how many occasions it has not worked out in that way. It usually comes down to the first-past-the-post result in the end.

Hon. Members have already commented on the use of the single transferable vote system in Northern Ireland. I recall the arguments about that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when some folk were shouting for it. One of the reasons given then was that it would be good because it would break the mould in Northern Ireland politics. If those who were happy at that prospect in 1970 could return to the House, they might not be so pleased in 1985 with the consequences of breaking the mould of politics in Northern Ireland.

In some quarters there is anxiety about proportional representation only because of a fear of Sinn Fein electoral success under the process. However, the intention of the STV system is to help minorities, regardless of who they are. The system tends to turn minority votes into quotas and, therefore, into seats on a council. Anyone who does not understand that is shutting his eyes to the realities of the system that has been introduced and is used in Northern Ireland.

The way to stop abuse is to produce a proper identity card—we shall not stop it with this order or with the previous legislation. However, the Government have steadfastly turned their back on that. Instead, they chose a complex system of preventing personation and persist in using an electoral system which negates all their efforts hitherto. The use of the STV system is a main reason why Northern Ireland political life has been in turmoil for the past 12 years. The system, more than any other, makes personation worth while, because personation can be spread over a considerable number of polling stations—perhaps nine or 10—and a relatively small number of people can go through a polling station, be lumped together and make up a quota. Even with the restrictions, Sinn Fein will undoubtedly do that. It will be sufficient to put Sinn Fein members on to councils in many parts of Northern Ireland, and many of the evils already mentioned will flow from that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) gave his reasons for wanting a first-past-the-post system, not least of which was the rapport which grows between an elected member of a ward or constituency and his electors. The objection has been voiced in many

[Mr. Ross]

quarters, and has been echoed in the House today, that even relatively large minority votes under the first-past-the-post system are not represented by their party. Time and again hon. Members have said that that is a source of division and resentment in the community. The truth is that the real strength of the simple majority system is that the representative who is responsible must meet and deal with all sections of the population, some of whom are unfriendly to him at first. In doing so, he finds out that they do not all have horns and cloven feet.

Mr. Scott: That is not my experience of local government. When I sat in local government in Greater London, I sat in a multi-member ward. That is the present practice throughout Greater London and in most metropolitan districts.

Mr. William Ross: There are two important differences. First, it was a multi-member ward. In multi-member wards where several representatives are elected on the first-past-the-post system, most of them are members of the same political party. The Minister was working in a system with which we in Northern Ireland are familiar. It is different in its outcome from the proportional representation system. I am sorry that the Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and defends PR, when he has no understanding of the practicalities on the ground. If he had, he could not have uttered those words.

The truth is that a single-member consituency or ward does more to create cohesion and respect for the various elements in society than any other, and that the PR system is inherently divisive. That is a fact of STV systems which I am sorry is not understood. If the Minister understood it, we would be discussing, not this order, but a straightforward simple majority system.

In 1977 my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down said that PR was an aching tooth that had to be taken away.

Mr. Powell: A rotten tooth.

Mr. Ross: It is a rotten tooth that aches. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will forgive my mistake. I listened to the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department make his attack on PR a few days ago from the very same Dispatch Box. I am curious to know who is speaking for the Government on this matter. Was it the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he took part in the debate on the Representation of the People Bill, or was it the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland? Is he speaking for the Government, the Northern Ireland Office or the Foreign Office? The Government should have only one voice——

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. I am dealing with the Government, not the Opposition.

The Government cannot have two views on this subject. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If proportional representation is so good at producing the marvellous results that are claimed for it, why do we not have it in local government elections in Great Britain? On every occasion it is rejected, often with the same arguments that are used by my hon. Friends against proportional representation in Northern Ireland.

If we wanted to ensure representation for the small minority groups, it would be better to introduce smaller wards, but that would not be cohesive. In Limavady the wards are more attuned to the communities than they used to be when we had to try to join differing groups across ward boundaries. We seemed to get away from that in the last redrawing of local government boundaries, but not as far as one would have wished.

In the Benbraddagh electoral area, in which I live, five wards stretch from the top of Glershare mountain down to and including part of the urban district of Limavady 17 miles away. I wonder how any Minister or Government can try to defend this mad system, which has done Ulster, Ulster politics and the Government no good, but which has done a great deal of good to organisations such as Sinn Fein, whose members are the front men of the IRA. For all we know, they may be active members of the IRA when the notion takes them. It is only because of this system that those violent, evil minorities have managed to gain a toehold in councils and in the Assembly. Perhaps eventually, should it ever be used here, they will get into the House. I know that a Sinn Fein Member has been elected to the House, although he was elected on a minority vote. In time, that aberration will disappear, but to continue using a system which guarantees that the most evil, wicked and violent elements in society can obtain representation in places where they can cause problems for law-abiding citizens and for the Government is mad. The sooner we are rid of the system, the better. If the Government had any wit, they would take away this nonsense tonight and introduce an order which does not contain the STV system.

6.22 pm

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): This is very much a trial-and-error order, because it introduces new procedures that will be put to the test in the local elections in May this year. I trust that the Minister will watch what happens at those elections and will be prepared to change the legislation if he discovers that the present proposals are wanting. Some of the recommendations in the order will not, in practice, be suitable for local government in the Province.

The first matter that I raise is allowable expenses for candidates fighting the local elections. It is understandable in a United Kingdom general election to have standard guidelines for expenses incurred by parliamentary candidates throughout the United Kingdom, because they are contesting constituencies which, in general, have the same number of electors. The usual figure is between 60,000 and 70,000. However, the weird system that the Northern Ireland Office imposes upon us in local government elections, means that there is a great variance in the size of the electoral areas. In some areas, the electorate is 10 times the size of that in other areas, which means that under the present recommendations in the order, some candidates will be able to spend 10 times as much as other candidates, perhaps in adjoining electoral areas. For example, the electoral areas in the Moyne division have extremely small populations, whereas in Belfast city the electorates are much larger. Yet the allowances are on a per capita basis. I believe that for local government elections in Northern Ireland, allowable expenses should not be on a per capita basis, although I understand why they are for United Kingdom parliamentary elections.

I support what hon. Members have said about the fact that no deposits will be required in the forthcoming local government elections. Once again, we must take into account the special and weird system that the Northern Ireland Office continues to impose on us—the multi-Member constituency and the multi-member electoral ward. The system means that many candidates' names are on the ballot paper. Often, there is not simply one candidate for each of the main political parties in the Province, but several. There is already a fairly lengthy ballot paper, but in addition, the order will encourage a free-for-all, with any Tom, Dick or Harry being able to put down his name and have it added to the ballot paper for the purposes of self-advertisement or as a publicity stunt. There must be some control over those who can contest elections. Returning officers will be worried that no provision has been made for a small deposit to be paid by those who wish legitimately to pursue the democratic process in local government elections.

I do not approve of the extension of polling hours in local government elections. The times used to be from 8 am until 8 pm, but the new recommendation is that polling should start at 7 am and finish at 10 pm. I understand why the Minister was encouraged to change the hours. He introduced the new system whereby those intending to vote must produce identification such as passports or driving licences. Therefore, it may take much longer for people to vote than heretofore. I hope that, under the new procedure, more staff will be provided to make the system of polling more efficient, so that it will not be a prolonged affair. If the system were made more efficient, it might be possible to retain the old polling hours.

Mr. Scott: If Parliament approves the Representation of the People Bill, the hours of 7 am to 10 pm will apply to all elections. The idea of having different times for local elections in Northern Ireland does not have much merit. It would only confuse people, who may turn up between 8 pm and 10 pm expecting to be able to vote and discover that they cannot do so. Some consistency is desirable.

Mr. Taylor: Practice on the ground is different, as the Minister would begin to learn if he was in Northern Ireland more often. The polling stations are almost empty after 8 pm. We must remember that we are talking about local government elections, which we have had in Northern Ireland since 1921. During the past 15 years, my experience has been that, after 8 pm, hardly a soul turns up to vote. The staff sit there for the last two hours with very little to do.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Nonsense.

Mr. Taylor: Why does the hon. Gentleman say, "Nonsense"?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have toured many polling stations during the EC election. Some people were turned away at 10 o'clock and could not vote.

Mr. Taylor: That is the point that I am trying to make. We are talking about local government elections. My experience in British parliamentary elections and European elections is entirely different, but we should remember that the turnout at local government elections is considerably lower than the turnout for United Kingdom general elections. We are lucky to get a 50 per cent. turnout in some local government elections. I assure the House that, after 8 pm, the number of those wishing to vote is extremely small. Will the Minister conduct a survey at the local elections in May to discover what percentage of the electorate votes between 8 pm and 10 pm?

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Would it not be correct to say that the reason why we saw nobody after 8 pm at the polling stations during the last local government elections was that 8 pm was the closing time? People would have been unable to vote after 8 o'clock. Does the hon. Member appreciate that in areas such as West Strabane 90 per cent. of the electorate vote, not 50 per cent?

Mr. Taylor: The percentages certainly vary. I am asking the Minister to allow the point to be tested. I see that the Minister is shaking his head as if to say that he will not allow it to be tested. However, I believe that it would be helpful if during the local government elections next May we discovered what percentage of the electorate voted between 8 pm and 10 pm. We should learn something from those figures. More staff must be made available next May at the polling stations because of the special procedures which will be used for the first time.

I disagree with the recommendation that people should be prohibited from voting even if they are at the polling station before 10 pm. If an individual is there before 10 pm, he is to be denied the right to vote if somebody ahead of him in the queue takes a long time to produce his passport or driving licence for checking by the returning officer. It will cause great resentment among those who have made every effort to be at the polling station between 8 am and 10 pm. I do not understand why such people are to be denied the right to vote.

Computers are being introduced throughout the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, to assist the political parties. We heard earlier that the Government have provided Sinn Fein, free of cost, with telex machines. I hope that Sinn Fein is paying the monthly rental for those machines. Computers are also being introduced. Certain electoral officers in Great Britain are making available to the political parties print-outs of the electoral roll in their wards or constituencies. In certain constituencies the print-outs are made available free of charge while in others a charge is made. The political parties in Northern Ireland should also be able to take advantage of the new technology. I welcome the fact that local government candidates in Northern Ireland are to enjoy free postal services.

In conclusion, I refer to proportional representation, which has already been debated at length this afternoon. This is a burning issue throughout Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is astounding that the Minister did not refer to it in his opening speech. He seems to be out of touch with the real political issues in the Province. I hope that in his closing speech he will take the opportunity to defend the introduction and maintenance of proportional representation in local government elections there. The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department gave his opinion of proportional representation. The practice in Northern Ireland is contrary to that followed in the rest of the United Kingdom. Why do we have to be different? The Minister must say why. If he does not give an adequate explanation we shall oppose the order.

It is important for local government representatives to be local people. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East

[Mr. Taylor]

(Mr. Ross) referred to an electoral area that was about 80 miles long. How can councillors living at one end of that area be described as "local" if they represent people who live at the other end of the area? That applies in my constituency of Strangford. A housing estate in Newtownards is linked to Killinchey, which is at the other end of Strangford Lough. Killinchey is rural and is a nice boating area. There is no common link between Newtownards and Killinchey. Nevertheless, all the councillors could live in Killinchey. There would be no common link with the housing estate at Newtownards. That is the cruel situation that is being created in Northern Ireland at local government level by the maintenance of the proportional representation system.

There is another problem. The Northern Ireland Office may have intended when it introduced proportional representation to divide the Ulster Unionists from the other main Loyalist parties in Northern Ireland. With the single transferable vote and multi-member areas, several candidates from the same party can contest an election in the same area. Therefore they fight not only their political opponents, but their party colleagues. That is no good for the political life of our community. All the parties suffer from the system. The proportional representation, single transferable vote system would work if there were only one candidate from each party, but experience, especially in the Republic of Ireland, has shown that STV candidates spend their time not fighting their political opponents but stabbing their party colleagues in the back. That is why the Fianna Fail party committed itself to the abolition of STV.

The only reason why Northern Ireland still has STV, despite its weaknesses, is that the system is used in the Republic. The Northern Ireland Office wants Northern Ireland to use the same system as is used in the Republic, not the system that is believed to be right for the rest of the United Kingdom. Because the order is yet another occasion when the Northern Ireland Office is not giving the people of Northern Ireland the same rights as are enjoyed in the rest of the United Kingdom, and because it will not strengthen and integrate the union, we shall oppose it.

6.37 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): My hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) has once again put his finger on an ambiguity. When we look at that ambiguity, we realise that there are problems which we had not expected. I refer to the definition of "polling station". I had always believed "polling station" to mean the school or other public building that is used at elections. However, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, it is defined in the order as the exact location where the presiding officer is sitting and where the ballot box is placed. It does not even include the booth where the ballot paper is marked.

Paragraph (4) of article 22 states:

"The returning officer shall provide each polling station with such number of compartments as may be necessary in which the voters can mark their votes screened from observation."

Therefore, the actual compartments are not part of the polling station. As I understand the order, the polling station is defined as the precise location of the ballot box, the presiding officer and his agent. That is confirmed in paragraph (3) of article 22, which states:

"The polling station allotted to electors from any polling district shall be in the polling place for that district."

Therefore, the school or other building which was formerly believed to be the polling station is now defined as "the polling place". The precise location of the polling station will be the ballot box.

What will be the ramifications for agents and other party workers? In the past I have always been able to ensure the removal of posters from the fences, gates and doors of polling stations. I was able to do so because "polling station" was defined as the area within the curtilage of the building. That included walls, fences or gates, for example. If that is no longer the definition of a polling station, and if we are now to talk about the polling place, it will not be possible to object to the placing of posters in the areas that I have described. That is a ramification of major significance.

In a number of elections I have been able to have evicted from the polling station active members of Sinn Fein who were prominently displaying their Sinn Fein favours and who were in a position to intimidate those entering the polling station to vote. Will I now be unable to object to members of Sinn Fein being in the polling station? Will these people be able to festoon the building with posters depicting black flags, as they have done in the recent past? On that occasion I was able to have the posters removed. Will they be able to patrol the corridors leading to and from the various rooms where the polling places are now to be located? These are significant matters, and I hope that the Minister will respond to them.

There will be problems for the Chief Electoral Officer. Article 25(3)(*c*) states that the Chief Electoral Officer will have to set out on the official poll card

"the date and hours of the poll and the situation of the elector's polling station."

He will no longer be able to refer to King's Park school, for example. Will he have to refer to the gymnasium of King's Park school? Will he have to specify the bottom right corner of the gymnasium of King's Park school, or the number of the classroom? If there are two polling places in a particular classroom, will he have to define where the polling place is in that room?

There are further problems. Articles 29 and 30 deal with admission to polling stations. Is admission to the polling station admission to the narrowly defined area of the location of the ballot box? If someone is creating a problem that causes difficulty for those responsible for keeping order in the polling station, article 30 provides that if that person

"fails to obey the presiding officer's lawful orders he may immediately, by the presiding officer's order, be removed from the polling station".

Does that mean that he is ejected into the corridor? This is important, because he will be able to continue to cause problems in the corridor. The same applies to ejection into the playground. Article 30 states:

"the person so removed shall not, without the presiding officer's permission, again enter the polling station during the day."

Does that mean that he can patrol the polling place or wander around the rest of the polling place as much as he wants as long as he does not enter the vicinity of the polling place?

There are polling stations in County Armagh where it is necessary to know precisely what is meant by this legislation. It is necessary to be able to enforce what is meant and to insist that the presiding officer does so. I

hope that we shall have some clarification. It seems that "polling station" means different things in different places in the order.

Article 22(3) states:

"The polling station allotted to electors from any polling district shall be in the polling place for that district."

Surely that is not to suggest that there will be only one polling place for each district electoral area. Surely that cannot be right, especially if the district electoral area stretches for about 15 miles and, for example, has a river running through it. If I am interpreting the provision correctly, there will be severe geographical and security problems.

Only yesterday I lodged an objection with the Chief Electoral Officer of Northern Ireland about the draft polling scheme. It is possible that he has acted in the light of article 22(3). He is insisting, or appears to be, that all the electors in a particular ward in Lurgan must go to one polling station. The polling station that he has chosen is situated on one side of a line which has been designated as a flashpoint area since 1969. This will create enormous problems for the security forces as well as for party workers and electors. The electors will have to cross the flashpoint area before they vote, and there will be enormous potential for trouble. I believe that the Chief Electoral Officer has been deterred from splitting the ward to allow the two segments of the ward to vote in safer polling stations. He may well feel that he is inhibited by article 22(3).

Mr. William Ross: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that the Feeny ward is split in three, with polling stations in three different schools. It is the ward in which I happen to live.

Mr. McCusker: It is clear that the Chief Electoral Officer is interpreting the order in his own way, and interpreting it differently in different places. I hope that the Minister will be able to provide clarification.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree that much of the difficulty arises from the high-handed attitude of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland? It has maintained the tradition of ignoring the advice of political parties which have been fighting elections for many years and whose combined experience is far greater than that of any boundary commission. Not so long ago a boundary commissioner in Northern Ireland ignored the advice of a political party because no other political party had bothered to make a submission. He explained that he thought that he and the commission might be biased if he were even to read the submission. It is hardly surprising that the wrong decision was made.

Mr. McCusker: My right hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear me say that I agree with him. Nothing surprises me any more about the electoral law which applies to Northern Ireland or the election processes applicable to it. The Minister has been asked to comment upon the observations of one of his ministerial colleagues at the Home Office. We shall be told that Northern Ireland is different. Whenever Northern Ireland is segregated from the rest of the United Kingdom — this applies to electoral matters and hundreds of others—we are told that Northern Ireland is different. That is the only explanation that Ministers can offer, and I have no doubt that we shall hear it again this evening.

I am pleased that the Minister has told us that the Chief Electoral Officer of Northern Ireland will take an initiative on the absent voters' list. Once the order is passed, I hope that the Chief Electoral Officer will move quickly. Some party workers are already concerned, and they may already be taking action. If the Chief Electoral Officer is to correspond with those on the existing absent voters' list to ask them whether they wish to be on the same list for local government elections, that will relieve us all, especially those who are qualified as absent voters. We shall be relieved of a great worry over the coming weeks.

Unlike my right hon. Friend the Member for Down, South, I am happy about polling stations remaining open until 10 o'clock. I would prefer the stations to be empty from 9 o'clock until 10 o'clock rather than have the prospect in the last half hour of coping with some of the difficulties and problems which have been described. Because it is a local government election, I hope that no one will queue up to 10 pm for a vote only to be denied that vote because the hour has struck. We might find that it is unnecessary to keep polling stations open for 15 hours, but, with the new demand on our electors, I believe that the more time we give people the better.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said about Sinn Fein. The Government were let off the hook by Sir George Baker, who recommended in his report that the Government should give urgent consideration to other means of dealing with Sinn Fein if they were not prepared to proscribe the organisation. For 18 months the Government have shilly-shallied and delayed holding a debate on this issue to hear what Northern Ireland Members have to say, and they are now confronted with precisely the situation described by the hon. Member for Belfast, East.

Why should the Minister, as an elected representative, think that he is different from any Northern Ireland local councillor when it comes to dealing with murderers and the apologists for murderers? Why should the Minister say, "I shall not talk to Gerry Adams or his ilk because they support, apologise for and defend killers," but expect my friends in the Craigavon and Banbridge district council areas to co-operate with those people for the well-being of the whole community?

Rev. William McCrea: Is it not difficult for the elected representatives on district councils to look across the floor at persons who are the godfathers of the IRA and who planned and plotted the murder of some of our best friends? Yet they are expected, as members of district councils, to carry on a political debate with those godfathers of the IRA. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is disgraceful?

Mr. McCusker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, this will be compounded 30 or 40 times, because there will be many more of those people to whom we must listen. The Government should have faced this before. I hope that in the years ahead the Government will not wring their hands and wish that local government representatives in Northern Ireland would act in a more co-operative fashion for the well-being of those who elected them.

What will be the procedure on election day? It has been suggested to me that, to avoid confusion and congestion at the polling stations, an advance guard will be put on the polling place and people will be admitted only if they have

[Mr. McCusker]

their identification with them. There will be immense organisational problems for the parties as well as for everyone else. I understand why that guard is proposed. If the problem can be kept at arm's length, perhaps there is some merit in it. Perhaps people can be sent away and told to come back when they have the proper identification.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: It is not lawful.

Mr. McCusker: That was my first thought. I am told that if someone was designated as a second presiding officer, or as a senior presiding officer, he could stand in a particular place and vet voters. I believe that there will be many problems in doing that. I presume that the Minister has been consulted on this matter, and I hope that he can give us some assistance. The Northern Ireland people want to know whether voters will go to polling stations, produce their documents in the way that I have described and obtain their vote in the normal way, or whether they will have to go through a two-stage operation before they can cast their vote.

6.53 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) made a useful comment in opening his speech when he said that, after May, local government in Northern Ireland will never be the same. The House would be deluding itself if it thought that there would be normal local government in Northern Ireland after 15 May. There will be confrontation after confrontation. Belfast city council has shown us what we can expect with one or two Sinn Fein members. Sinn Fein members are bringing their supporters with them to council meetings. A council chairman who is afraid to offend Sinn Fein allows those supporters to sit near the place where councillors take their seats. We know the type of mob rule that will come into local government in Northern Ireland.

The House and the Government should have taken a serious view of this matter but, instead, there is a double standard. A Minister of the Crown in Northern Ireland says to Sinn Fein, "You are political lepers, and we don't talk to you." However, the Government expect their civil servants to talk to Sinn Fein and the elected representatives and people of Northern Ireland to co-operate with Sinn Fein in local government.

There is no difference between a Sinn Fein man and an IRA man. The IRA is the military wing of Sinn Fein. At night they are IRA men and during the day they pose as public representatives. During the day they talk about the ballot box and at night they use the Armalite, the bomb and the mortar to do their murder work. I could not agree more with the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) when he said that the Government were given an opportunity by an outside source—so they cannot be accused that they thought this up—to say, "Let people who eschew violence be prepared to make that declaration and be nominated." We know perfectly well that Sinn Fein would not and does not eschew violence and therefore should not stand for election.

The Government believe in some way that it is their business to save the SDLP. The leader of the SDLP does not even think it worth his while to sit through the whole of this debate, even though we are discussing this subject because of SDLP representations about Sinn Fein. That is hard to stomach. The gravity of this situation will be seen only when the results of the May elections are known.

For some reason, some hon. Members have wished to change the voting patterns in Northern Ireland. They have thought that that could be done by altering constituencies, gerrymandering boundaries and changing the voting system but, through the years, the Northern Ireland people have demonstrated where their loyalties lie. All the changes have made no difference. At the end of elections, the rock-solid desire of the people of Northern Ireland to remain an integral part of this kingdom and to refuse any arrangements with the Irish Republic has been signalled repeatedly.

I remember what happened during the first election for the Northern Ireland Assembly. The words "On Her Majesty's Service" were actually taken off the envelopes that contained the postal ballots. In fact, the civil servants painted out those words on some envelopes. I brought up that matter with the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He said that those words offended people and that it was better to take off those words so that the people would vote. The words "On Her Majesty's Service" were struck out. Concessions were made.

Mr. Molyneaux: Has the hon. Gentleman investigated whether envelopes treated in that way ever conveyed social security benefits?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The old saying:

"Loyalty to the half crown if not to the Crown"

is applicable in those circumstances. I did not make any inquiry. We were told that we could not call the Assembly a Parliament; we had to call it an Assembly because at that time the agitators had an assembly at Dungiven. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) was the president of the so-called Assembly of North Irishmen. It was a wonderful institution. The former hon. Member for Belfast, East, the then Mr. Fitt, did not fit in. He attended it once only although he was the leader of the group.

All those interesting things happened. Various changes were made, but every time, the electorate said, "Look, this is where our loyalties lie." All the electoral and boundary changes did not make any difference. The people cast their votes.

Mr. William Ross: Has the hon. Member considered that Dungiven castle, in which the Republican Parliament met, was built for famine relief? Perhaps the Republicans were showing their famine for a united Ireland by meeting there in the first place.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Hon. Members can draw their own conclusions, but it was not an effective place to meet. The Republicans must have been famished for want of intelligence, because it did not do them any good then.

The people cast their votes, but the results of the ballot in Northern Ireland have not been acceptable to successive Governments. They do not like how the people of Northern Ireland vote. That is the root cause of all the trouble. We make all these changes, but the people still vote.

I should prefer to see a uniform system of voting in the whole of the United Kingdom. I prefer having a constituency that I can call my own. However, despite all the agitation and changes when the Unionists were united in the United Ulster Unionist Coalition they put it on

record at the convention that if the suggested system was desired and if the minorities felt that it was the only way to bring peace, then they would wear it. They said that they would consider a modified list system. They spelt that out clearly.

The elected representatives of the Unionist people of Northern Ireland were not intransigent. They clearly said that if the suggested electoral system would bring peace, they would vote in that way. After all, the first Parliament in Northern Ireland was elected in that way and it was built in to the old Stormont system for electing the Senate.

We can have the single transferable vote or any other electoral system in Northern Ireland, but the hard Republican core of the people will not concede that it has democracy or liberty. Whichever way the Assembly is elected, the Republicans will still be against it, and seek to root it out and destroy it.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was riding one of his hobby horses when he said that Northern Ireland had equal representation at Westminister, but in paragraph 4 of its findings, the UUUC said that, if it was to have equal representation at Westminister, Northern Ireland should have 24 seats in the House. It wanted

"the boundaries and exact number of the constituencies to be determined by judicial commission on a basis and scale similar to comparable parts of the United Kingdom."

The party opposite was in the Assembly and it voted for that. I think that we were done out of proper representation in this House, but that is a matter for argument.

If we are to have an election in Northern Ireland, it should be run in a way to give public representatives some confidence in the electoral law. Many things have been mentioned tonight that the Government must face up to.

I asked that the polling hours be extended, and I believe that I was right to do so. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) has left the Chamber. Many of the things that he said were nonsense because, in the old elections — the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) knew this well — there were many multi-seat councils. Ballymoney town council had 10 seats. The members all stood together. Belfast city council had four seats in a ward — an alderman and four councillors. No points can be made from that. The wards worked in different ways.

We are going to have an election where people will be bamboozled about a document. We have had the first literature about the document through our doors. The confusion has already started. People are asking what document they should take. A lady said to me, "Will it be all right if I take my marriage lines?" I told her that it would not be all right because she did not come into the category of someone needing marriage lines. I told her that she would need another document.

I must give the Minister credit. He took on board the fact that we wanted longer polling hours. I am grateful for that. If there is no one in the polling booth at 9 o'clock after a high poll, I shall be quite happy. An hour's rest will not do anyone any harm at the end of the day.

I know what will happen in the election. It will be another roll call of those who say no to Sinn Fein, no to the Irish forum and no to a united Ireland. The temperature will be hot. There will be a massive vote at the election. People will be voting with their feet. People will come without a document. They will have to be sent away. The parties will have to have transport to take the people home, wait until they have gone through their drawers to discover the document and then return them to the polling station. We will therefore need longer hours. I hope that point will be taken. We will need more workers in the polling stations. That is important.

I am glad that the poll card will carry a reminder about the documents that are required. That will be helpful. The Minister must clarify the points that have been put tonight.

I want to ask the Minister about the national flag being flown at polling stations. There is an argument about it at every election. Sinn Fein objects to the national flag being flown. At some polling stations it is taken down by the presiding officer but at others it still flies. Will the Minister tell us what the law is on that matter? The grievances start in the morning and run all day. The heat and the opposition start early. It is an important matter. Opposition Members who know nothing about Northern Ireland elections might wonder why I am talking about a flag. If they knew how deep the feeling runs they would know what happens. The presiding officer is accused of being a rebel, an IRA man, a Sinn Feiner, and so forth. All sorts of things happen in polling stations. For the sake of peace, let us know what the law is.

The matters that the hon. Member for Upper Bann mentioned must be clarified. One presiding officer will take one view. He will refer to the old rule and say, "This school is a polling station." When I read that I did not understand it. I asked my friends on the way over, "What is a polling station? Is it the place itself—the school or the building—or is it just part of the building?" I hope that the Minister can clarify that point.

Mr. Peter Robinson: The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) settled for the interpretation that the polling place is the building in which polling takes place, while the polling station is the ballot box, the presiding officer and the clerk. If that interpretation is incorrect, the order needs to be radically changed. It provides for only one political agent from each political party for the whole polling station. If the polling station is actually the whole polling place, one political agent will not be enough.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Minister should give a clear definition tonight of the polling place and the polling station. We will then know how many workers we can have in the place and in the station.

An order laid here cannot be amended; the order will go through tonight. I do not know how the Government can amend the order, or clarify the position, without withdrawing it. I know that an interpretation given by the Minister at the Dispatch Box cannot be taken to be the judicial opinion on an Act or an order, but we would like to know what the Government have in mind with regard to this important matter.

I hope and pray that the election period will pass quietly, but I doubt that that is possible. I know that those parties which had hoped for a full turnout of people will have difficulty because of the changes that did not need to be made.

I would be far happier if one identity card had been issued. Everyone would have had a poll card — an identity card—when they cast their vote, and after the election, the Government could have considered other matters.

Good suggestions have been made to the Minister about the possibility of registering in a certain way, requiring a

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

signature, and so on. I know that such suggestions cannot be adopted at this election. We missed the boat, and we now have a cumbersome system and many difficulties to overcome. It will be a difficult time for Northern Ireland. The Sinn Fein vote will come out, but there will be people who will say, "We have had all these difficulties. What is the use?" The measure that the Government thought would help against Sinn Fein may be the very thing that will help it.

7.13 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In a sense, we are engaged in a two-tier discussion. On one tier, hon. Members have been seeking clarification of many important points which should be cleared up well in advance of the election campaign.

On the second tier, there is the fundamental objection that we nearly all share to the principle — or lack of principle—of the proportional representation system. In recent elections there has been a great deal of confusion over the definition of the polling station. On many occasions, the wrong ruling has been given. The confusion arises, first, from the fact that the Representation of the People Act, supported by that authoritative document, "Parker's Election Guide", defined the polling station for the purposes of a Westminster election as the room in which polling takes place. I have in my files at home a Home Office ruling on that point in regard to a building that still exists in my own constituency. The ruling was given in the 1960s.

The Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962, on the other hand, on which the order is based, gave a different ruling. It defined the polling station as the entire building, and, in some cases, the curtilage of the building. That was a recipe for confusion. As long as the two systems of election in Northern Ireland were kept separate, we got away with it. The confusion did not arise. Stormont elections and local government elections were clearly held under the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962, while Westminster elections were held under the Representation of the People Act.

Once that blessed creature known as the chief electoral officer was introduced—I speak of the office rather than of a particular person—together with all his attendant satellites, assistants and assistant deputies, the confusion became compounded. Those officials took it upon themselves to define the position as it suited them on any particular occasion. They took what they wanted out of whichever electoral Act best suited their purposes. Consequently, they not only gave mistaken rulings but caused confusion in the minds of the unfortunate people who had to operate the system—the presiding officers in the various polling stations. Many decisions were made that were quite wrong in law. Had they ever been contested in an election court, I fear that some times—I will not specify the occasions, because I have a vested interest in some of them—candidates might have been unseated. That is how serious the situation is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) has drawn attention to the third element of confusion—rule 22 (2) and (3). Rule 22(3) refers to the polling district. That is a new term. In the old days we knew what a polling district was, but in these enlightened days of wards and electoral areas created for the purpose of holding proportional representation elections, it doubtful whether anyone understands the term "poll district". That is another matter that needs clarificatio

It is very important that all those contradictions sho be avoided. That can only be done in an authoritat manner. The rulings must be clearly understood by ev one engaged officially in running the elections. The Ch Electoral Officer must be clear in his own mind about precise directions that he is giving and the possi interpretations of those directions. The unfortun presiding officers and clerks at the polling station, as w as the party officials there, have a right to obtain cl rulings.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann have heard rumours and reports of a filtering device bei employed at the entrance of a polling station or polli place. Such ideas are being bandied about, and Minister has a golden opportunity tonight to put a stop them.

The Minister who piloted through the Electio (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 — that unwanted piece legislation—will be well aware that any attempt to fil and vet electors when they present themselves at entrance to the polling station is illegal under that A Section 1(2)(1B) of that Act clearly provides that, wh and elector produces one of the prescribed documents, presiding officer or clerk to whom it is produced mu issue that elector with a ballot paper.

If the rumours — they are rather better than w rumours, as some of us could name those who have be consulted, but would not want to damage their chances promotion, such as they are—are correct and the wei schemes are put into effect, the filtering officer at the do of the polling station, since he has no discretion, wou have to produce the ballot paper on demand. He wou also have to have at hand a copy of the register, to che the identity of the elector. I hope that the Minister will provoked into slapping down such fanciful ideas toda and no later.

The Minister said that the Chief Electoral Officer a his deputies are the proper people to run election especially local government elections. We do not disser Council clerks used to perform the duties and there we occasionally hiccups. For example, a fairly inexperienc council clerk cheerfully permitted all the candidates nominate themselves, and he accepted their nominatio on the basis of their electoral placing, title and number the list of electors printed on the blue sheets which can out in November, rather than on the register in Februar Fortunately, that slip-up was detected in time. Counc clerks have achieved miracles and done what I have nev been able to do — make sense of the procedur regarding proportional representation election counts.

Mr. William Ross: It is simple.

Mr. Molyneaux: My hon. Friend might think so, b I put them in the same category as decimal coinage a metric measurement—I do not want to know at my tim of life. If the advocates of proportional representation the House—thankfully, they are becoming fewer—cou see the charade of an election count under proportion representation, I am sure that they would oppose it for th rest of their lives. We have recently been encouraged b the evidence given by, and the common sense of, ho Members in debates on the Representation of the Peop

Bill. There were few supporters of proportional representation in those debates and they are confined entirely to that element of the House which is absent today.

I am sure that the House shares my disappointment at the failure of my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) to illustrate how proportional representation did what one would have thought impossible — return councillors whom the electorate clearly did not want. The returning officer tells himself that he must establish a quota once he knows how many votes have been cast, and then determines which candidates have reached the quota. He suddenly realises that only six have reached the quota and that there are seven stools to be occupied. He casts his eye over the other candidates who have remained patiently in the place of the count, seizes on the most likely lad among the also-rans and declares him elected, although he has not reached the quota.

Hon. Members have mentioned the consequences of PR elections. Those who believe that electors are advantaged by having a choice of perhaps seven representatives are mistaken. For example, a well-subscribed petition might be given to Councillor A, who takes it to the responsible Minister and asks that the petition be considered carefully. A small group of the signatories then strike on the bright idea of going to Councillor B. Unfortunately, they do not have a copy of the original petition, so they present a garbled version. In some cases, that version differs materially from the original.

The fun does not stop there, as other groups of signatories feel that there is benefit to be derived from approachng all the other councillors, and they all give a different version. It might be simple if it stopped with the Department, as it might be able to make some sense of it all, but the matter is taken up with other authorities in Northern Ireland, thus adding to the confusion. Ministers can justifiably claim that they can sort out such confusion but, in this wicked world, we must acknowledge that the confusion creates a haven to which bureaucrats can retreat and in which they are immune to the probing attacks of Ministers, however diligent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann made a forecast which I believe will prove true. It is that the Minister will, like his predecessors, perpetuate proportional representation on the grounds that Northern Ireland is different. Ministers have consistently been hell-bent on keeping Northern Ireland different, and that is why we end up being regarded as different. The Secretary of State might recall the Prime Minister of the day in 1972 saying, when asked the purpose of abolishing Stormont and introducing some weird legislation, that it was designed to break the mould. Proportional representation was one of the hammers used to break the mould. It failed, as was illustrated dramatically after one of these crazy elections in Northern Ireland — it might have been for the first Northern Ireland Assembly — when the Secretary of State, sitting in the Tea Room with his head in his hands the day after the count said, "Jim, I'm sorry, I have to admit that a majority will remain a majority no matter how you rig the system."

It is precisely because the PR system fails on every count that we have to say, "Away with it." We on this Bench are therefore compelled to vote tonight against what in this order has clearly proved to be a failed system.

7.31 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) I listened with great interest to his arguments and to the various speeches that have been made. I felt rather like the bull fighter in a couple of lines of Spanish poetry which John Kennedy liked very much:

> "Bull-fight critics ranked in rows fill the arena full.
> But only one is there who knows—and he's the one who fights the bull."

I am not entirely sure who it is who has been fighting the bull, whether it is the Minister or the right hon. Members for South Down (Mr. Powell) and for Lagan Valley and the hon. Members for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). I do know, however, that I am certainly the critic in what was a solitary row, but I am very glad to be joined by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

I want to congratulate the Minister, as I have in the past, on the careful and articulate way in which he has taken the House through the terms of the order. He described it as safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process and said that this obliged him to give a lengthy and technical description of the order. The House and I are grateful to him for that, even though the right hon. Member for South Down differed with the Minister on the aims of the order.

The Minister said that the aims of the order were to bring to bear in local government elections in Northern Ireland measures which Parliament has agreed should govern elections to this House. I would have thought that that would be very welcome to right hon. and hon. Members from Northern Ireland. The second strand of the Minister's thinking was that this order would bring the election rules more closely into line with the rules governing local government elections on this side of the water.

I am grateful for the pat on the back, in metaphorical terms, from the right hon. Member for South Down. He quite rightly told the House that it was pressure from Her Majesty's Opposition that led to the acceptance by the Government of the principle that the electors of Northern Ireland are entitled to be governed by the same electoral law as the rest of the United Kingdom.

The right hon. Member for South Down also gave his view that the order perpetuates the application to local government elections of the system of proportional representation. That theme has been taken up by several hon. Members. The right hon. Member for South Down described it as a disjunction which he thought was unjustifiable. We saw a dichotomy on the part of the Ulster Unionists—on the one hand welcoming and encouraging election laws which are the same as those in this country and on the other hand complaining, justifiably in their view, that they are always treated differently. This is a point of view that came up time and time again in the speeches made.

I nearly intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East when he asked the Minister whether he was speaking on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office or Her Majesty's Government. I would have thought that in the eyes of most Ulster Unionists they were one and indivisible. It shows the difficulty they have in disentangling their thinking in relation to the electoral laws of our country as they relate also to Northern Ireland.

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

The Opposition welcome this order, as they welcomed the original Bill. The main provisions of the order substitute new election rules for the rules in the Electoral Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1962 and correspond to sections 1 and 2 of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985—that is, to prevent personation. The order also makes a number of other changes which should be noted and which we welcome.

One relates to postal voting, and the 10th annual report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights points out that provisions with regard to postal votes in Northern Ireland differ for general elections, assembly elections and local elections. This is clearly unsatisfactory and confusing. The order brings the provisions for local elections into line with those for general elections. That is to be welcomed. The advisory commission has recommended that there should be a standing list of postal voters for use in all elections. It has also recommended that postal voting on the grounds of change of residence should be reintroduced, pointing out that the numbers involved represent only about 2 per cent. of the total number of applications made. A number of cases have already been brought to the commission's attention involving moves from Derry to Belfast which makes it impracticable to vote at the old address.

We have heard some discussion tonight of the time at which polling booths close. In a democracy it must be in the interest of all those who wish to vote to have as long as possible in which to do so. I have stood in elections and I can recollect taking someone to the polling booth as late as a quarter to ten at night. We rushed him in and he was the last person to vote. When we brought him out my wife asked me if I was thinking what she was thinking, and we agreed that we thought that he had voted Conservative. Nevertheless, the principle remains that, the longer there is for people to vote, the more democratic it must be.

We therefore support the order. I have listened with great interest to the debate. I learn as I go along in this post of mine. I have learned to admire the way in which an order before the House can be widened and deepened to cover proportional representation, Sinn Fein, flags, crowns and half-crowns. It is very democratic. It is also nice to see the depth and the technicality of these debates. I am sure that the House is a better place for them and I am sure that Northern Ireland will be a better place when this order becomes law.

7.37 pm

Mr. Scott: I want to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for the welcome that he has given to the order. I agree with most of what he said, and I am grateful to him for giving his support from the Opposition Front Bench to this very important measures.

We have had a long, sometimes technical, often detailed debate on this order and I shall seek to deal as succinctly as I can with as many as possible of the points that have been raised. I shall come at the end of the coverage of the detailed points to the fundamental question first raised by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), and echoed by others, about proportional representation and the Government's decision to continue with that system in this order.

I must at the outset express, in a low-key way worry that I have. I direct this particularly to the right Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). I particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, I considerably worried when elected representatives se question motives or the approach of officials who responsible for the electoral process. It must be Mini who stand at this Dispatch Box and take the responsi for decisions that have to be made, whether in the sh for example, of an order for electoral districts or any else. I have already paid a warm tribute to Sir F Harrison and his staff for the work that they have through the various boundary commissions.

I was very worried to read the reports of the debat the Representation of the People Bill, in which the Member for Antrim, North sought to imply amendments had been proposed to that piece of legisl were somehow the responsibility of the Chief Elec Officer. They are not. They are the responsibilit Ministers collectively, who will, of course, take the ad of the Chief Electoral Officer, the Standing Advi Commission on Human Rights, locally elected politic and others in coming to these decisions, but we responsibility for the proposals that come forward.

I should like at the outset of my speech to make my appreciation of the work that is done by the C Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland and his staff. T dedication and integrity in difficult circumstances, terrorist activity and so on, have enabled the democ process in Northern Ireland to operate smoothly. I much hope that, in future, criticisms of proposals tha brought before the House will be directed at Ministers at officials who do their best to see that the pro operates as smoothly as possible.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the Minister implying that he hold himself responsible, even during an elec campaign, for dealing with any matters that may a where it is believed, and even seen, by party officials members that the Chief Electoral Officer or some of subordinates are acting contrary to the law? Is the l Gentleman prepared to put himself in the same positio the Home Secretary, who, although Parliament woul dissolved, would be prepared to give advice on matters?

Mr. Scott: Obviously I would be answerable at Dispatch Box for what happened during elections Northern Ireland. Responsibility for the detailed opera of the law will rest with the Chief Electoral Officer. point that I was making was that proposals that we b before the House for changes in the law are responsibility of Ministers, not of any official. If critici are made, they should be of Ministers, not of officia

Rev. Ian Paisley: During the debate I was tryin point out that the suggestions and the input were from Chief Electoral Officer and his staff. They make up th ideas and sell them to the Minister, and then the Mini puts them forward. I was tracing the parentage of particular embryo. I think that that is how I describe

Mr. Scott: I hope that it will not become the cust particularly in the difficult circumstances of North Ireland, for such criticisms to be made.

I should like to refer to some of the detailed points were raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Belf

East (Mr. Robinson) referred to what came to be called, during our earlier debates, the discretion of presiding officers. Let me make the position absolutely clear. It is necessary within the law for anyone who presents himself at a polling station and asks for a ballot paper to produce one document from the list set out under the law. However, if someone produces a document in which there is an error or something that does not exactly square up —a different address or something of that sort—and the presiding officer knows who the elector is, such a discrepancy cannot arouse a reasonable doubt in the mind of the presiding officer. Therefore, it is lawful for him to hand over a ballot paper. I have said that before but I reiterate it on this occasion because the point was raised.

The 10 o'clock shutter was mentioned by the hon. Member for Belfast, East and others. That system has operated on this side of the water without great difficulty for many years. If one applies to the presiding officer for a ballot paper before 10 o'clock, one gets it. However, if one is just inside the door either of the polling station or within the polling place, and the ballot paper has not been issued, at 10 o'clock the shutter comes down, and that is the end of it. We are bringing Northern Ireland into line with the accepted practice which has been operated with no great difficulty on this side of the water for many years.

Another matter that was raised was the deposit. With a £15 deposit——

Mr. Molyneaux: I take it that the Minister is moving on from the conduct of the polling station. Before he does so, will he consider dealing with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), myself and others about the so-called filter at the entrance to the polling station?

Mr. Scott: I think the House knows that I am always anxious to give way, but I shall deal later with that and several other detailed points as succinctly as possible. If I inadvertently miss any of them, I shall make sure that hon. Members are written to. I promise that I shall not deliberately evade any of the matters that have been raised in the debate.

I do not believe that a £15 deposit is any insurance against candidates who may wish to come forward to gain publicity. The decision that the Government had to take was either substantially to increase the deposit for local government candidates, or to get rid of it. We looked at both possibilities and decided that on balance it was easier to get rid of it and, again, bring Northern Ireland into line with practice in local government elections on this side of the water. I entirely accept that there can be two views about that, but I would not have thought that simply maintaining the deposit at £15 made much sense.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East and many others raised the fundamental question whether there should be a requirement for candidates to sign a declaration of non-violence before they took part in an election, designed to exclude Sinn Fein candidates from the electoral process. I acknowledge that the proposal, in the view of those who suggested it, was very much a second best. They preferred that the Government should proscribe or ban Sinn Fein, but in the absence of that came up with a second best way of excluding Sinn Fein from the electoral process. Of course, the Government looked at both propositions. The one that has been put forward tonight is the signing of a declaration.

The reason why the Government have turned their back on that proposition is that we believe that in practice it would have no significant beneficial effect on the electoral process. There would be formidable difficulties of definition in any such operation. There would be nothing to stop a candidate from making such a declaration at nomination stage and being lawfully nominated, and subsequently announcing that he had changed his mind. Some hon. Members said that Sinn Fein would then be shown up to be dishonest. I cannot imagine members of Sinn Fein blushing hard at that.

One way round would be to make the advocacy of violence before or after an election ground for disqualification, but there are great difficulties in devising criteria as to what could be regarded as supporting violence, and perhaps even what constituted violence, in this context. I emphasise that powers already exist which prohibit membership of a proscribed organisation and deal with criminal offences such as incitement to violence. Those sanctions apply as much to candidates at any election as to others. In addition, people who have served significant prison sentences in the recent past are debarred from standing at elections. Therefore, although I can understand the reasons that have prompted the hon. Member for Belfast, East and others to make that proposal, I do not believe that it would have a beneficial effect on the electoral process in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McCusker: I presume that the Minister is now giving us the Government's considered response to Sir George Baker's suggestion. However, let us put the matter in perspective, although I acknowledge the comments that the Minister has made. Some people think that somehow or other Sinn Fein is the controlling body. In fact, it is the creature of the IRA. For whatever reason, the Provisional IRA decided publicly two or three years ago at its annual conference to ensure that it mandated Sinn Fein unambiguously to support its violent campaign. It had some psychological or propaganda reason for doing that. The IRA insisted that its creature should publicly state its support for violence and violent means of overthrowing the state. Is the Minister saying that it is not worth while challenging the IRA on that psychological or propaganda point and at least forcing it and its creature, if necessary, to climb down from that position?

Mr. Scott: If we were going to do that the answer would be to proscribe Sinn Fein, but that would not be a practical way forward. We shall give a considered response to Sir George Baker's report in due course, but for the purposes of the order we take the view—I do not believe that it will change—that to go down the road of asking for a declaration opposing or renouncing violence would not be a practical possibility.

Rev. Ian Paisley: This is a very important issue, perhaps the most important issue that we have discussed. The Minister says that he does not believe that the IRA is honest, but there are some things about which Republicans are absolutely honest. One could not find any Sinn Fein IRA man who would not identify himself with the campaign of violence. Anyone who says anything different has not studied the mentality of Irish Republicanism. That is why Sinn Fein will say, "We will never make that declaration for a British Government." Therefore, the Government would be effectively weeding them out. Those of us who are involved in elections know

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

that. History proves it. One has only to look at the irregulars, led by de Valera at one time in the South, to know that in those things they are basically honest. They are dishonest in other things, but on that issue—the quick of the matter—they will stand by their guns, literally.

Mr. Scott: Obviously we took that into account in coming to our decision, and we came to a different view. Even if we were successful in proscribing Sinn Fein, there would be nothing to stop Republicans, even those who privately support the armed struggle, as they choose to call it, from presenting themselves for election under another banner, such as H-block candidates or whatever, as they have done in the past. My argument against that is based on the practical difficulties of translating anything like that into a law that would bring about the effect that hon. Gentlemen wish to achieve.

There appears to be some confusion about polling stations and polling places. Rule 22(3) of the local elections rules, which have been referred to many times in the debate, is in the same terms as the equivalent provision in the rules for parliamentary elections. The school premises, if we take that as the usual example, are the polling place, and within that polling place there can be one or more polling stations. A polling stations is not, as it were, the ballot box but the area within which there are a number of polling booths, the ballot box, the presiding officer and his assistants. I hope that that will resolve the confusion between polling stations and polling places.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) referred to order within the polling station itself and asked about the advance guard of people coming in. In regard to maintaining order within the polling station, the power to remove people from a polling station would be vested in anyone who was given written authority by the presiding officer to do that. It would be possible for a member of the security forces other than the Royal Ulster Constabulary to be so authorised.

In regard to the advance guard, I do not envisage anything like the picture that was painted by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley. I hope that the Chief Electoral Officer and the presiding officers under his guidance will be at pains to direct the staff who are available to them in such a way as to minimise any delay or inconvenience that might be caused to electors during polling hours. The presiding officer might station a clerk at the entrance to inquire of electors as they arrived, "Are you sure you have one of the prescribed documents with you—otherwise it will be impossible for the presiding officer to give you a ballot paper when you get in?" That would be sensible. There would be no question of infringing the law if a gentle, oral reminder were to be given to an elector as he arrived at the polling place and before he got to the polling station.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the Minister refer to the expression "polling district" in rule 22, which does not appear to be defined?

Mr. Scott: As I indicated, I shall try to deal with as many points as possible.

In regard to the standing list for European Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly elections, which was raised by the hon. Member for Londonderry, Ross), by virtue of regulations made under the Assembly Elections Act 1978, the standin parliamentary elections applies also to Europea but it does not apply to elections to the North Assembly. As, in the normal course of events, be an election for the Northern Ireland As October of next year, we shall consider tha whether we can have a common standing list all elections in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann asked w Chief Electoral Officer would contact all vot standing list of postal voters as soon as the made. He will be doing that and will ask the they wish to be placed on the standing list government elections.

Let us be as clear as we can about polling District electoral areas are divided into polling They are conterminous with what is frequentl ward, but for the purposes of this exercise it i polling district which matters. That is the area in the rule to which the right hon. Gentleman Each of those polling districts which have been the Boundary Commission will have one poll Within that it will be possible to have more polling station.

Mr. McCusker: Does that mean that Electoral Officer can make a decision which v immense problems for everyone concerned? I ha to the local police about this, and it is importa

Mr. Scott: The Chief Electoral Officer has a draft scheme dealing with the siting and the r polling places. Representations have been made scheme. The hon. Gentleman may not be surpris that. There will be changes in the final sch impression is that there will be an appreciable i the number of polling stations and polling place that most of his worries will be resolved. I canno off-the-cuff answer about the one that he men Lurgan.

Mr. William Ross: When the changes a considered will there be meetings with objector consideration be given only to written applica changes?

Mr. Scott: The Chief Electoral Officer has a draft scheme. Some people have made ob Objections had to be in by yesterday. The Chief Officer will make up his mind about the dispo polling stations and polling places. We must settled as soon as possible.

I wish to cover two more important points, one more depth than the other. In reply to a query by Member for Antrim, North, I can tell him that th law requiring or forbidding the flying of the Unio polling stations. It may be flown at discretion, is no law which requires or forbids it.

I shall deal with proportional representation br because there are not detailed arguments to be both sides of the coin, but because the Governm for some time made absolutely clear their view best means of ensuring the representation of min Northern Ireland is through the vehicle of pro representation. I do not believe that the House

surprised to hear that the Government retain their commitment to a belief that for local elections, European elections and Northern Ireland Assembly elections proportional representation is the best way of doing that.

Several hon. Members raised, in a sense, the subsidiary issue of multi-member wards. As I have said, there are plenty of examples on this side of the water where electors find it perfectly easy to cope with multi-member wards.

The right hon. Member for South Down has displayed great patience over proportional representation for the past eight years, since Ray Carter stood at the Dispatch Box and implied that things might change some day. However, I would not wish to hold out that hope to the right hon. Gentleman. If we ever return to devolved government in Northern Ireland, which is this Government's aim, the decision about that in relation to local government elections, at least, would be a matter for the devolved Government of Northern Ireland.

I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 121, Noes 17.

Division No. 152] **[8 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hume, John
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beggs, Roy
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Murphy, Christopher
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
Paisley, Rev Ian
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Maginnis and
Mr. William Ross.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

8.11 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): It might be helpful if I made it clear that the debate on this order may cover all matters for which Northern Ireland Departments, as distinct from the Northern Ireland Office, are responsible. The police and security are the principal excluded subjects.

Dr. Boyson: The Order is being made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974. Ths purpose of the draft order is to appropriate the 1984-85 Spring Supplementary Estimates and the 1985-86 Vote on Account of Northern Ireland Departments.

Part I of the schedule covers the issue of a further £68 million out of the Consolidated Fund of Northern Ireland in respect of the Spring Supplementary Estimates of Northern Ireland Departments and appropriates this sum for the purposes shown in the schedule. This sum is in addition to some £2,872 million, which has already been approved by the House for the 1984-85 financial year. It brings the total Estimate provision for 1984-85 to just over £2,940 million.

Part II of the schedule gives details of the issues for which the Vote on Account of £1,323 million for 1985-86 is required. This provision is necessary to enable services to continue until the 1985-86 Main Estimates are debated later in the year. The sums required on account are based on the standard calculation of 45 per cent. of the total provision for the current financial year, except in those classes where it is known that the pattern of expenditure will differ significantly in the incoming year.

The main Estimates for 1985-86 will, of course, be framed within the total public expenditure provisions set out in the Government's White Paper on Public Expenditure, which was publised in January.

As hon. Members will be aware, the public expenditure allocation to Northern Ireland Departments for 1985-86 is some £30 million higher than had been originally planned. This is further clear evidence of the Government's continued commitment to tackling the Province's economic and social problems, particularly coming at a time when public expenditure in the United Kingdom as a whole is being held at the previously planned levels.

Full details of all the provisions sought in the draft order can be found in two volumes, copies of which have been placed in the Vote Office. These are entitled "Spring Supplementary Estimates" and "Statement of Sums Required on Account".

Before coming to the main points of the Supplementary Estimates, it is important that I should comment on the economic prospects for Northern Ireland. This is particularly relevant because the draft order includes increased aid for industry. Some of the alterations have come about because of the need for extra money for the development or changes in respect of factories, as I shall explain.

It is clear from recent economic indicators that Northern Ireland, in common with the rest of the UK, is experiencing a revival of economic activity, and the signs are that this will continue. In Northern Ireland, the trend for total industrial production and manufacturing output remains upward, with output for these sectors in the first three quarters of 1984 up by 3 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively when compared with the same period in 1983.

It is particularly encouraging to note that the recovery is broadly based, with most sectors now displaying some improvement. The most recent employment figures provide further evidence of this recovery. Indeed, the number of persons employed, as I mentined earlier at Question Time, rose by 4,170 in the third and fourth quarters of 1984.

Nevertheless, unemployment remains the major economic problem in the Province, as hon. Members will be aware. As in Great Britain, the trend is still upwards, although there are clear signs that the rate of increase is moderating. For example, the increase in unemployment was only 420 between February 1984 and February 1985, according to figures published today. That compares with over 7,800 in the preceding 12 months.

That represented a loss of employment — nobody wants any loss; there will be nothing to cheer about until there is a gain rather than a loss—but the figures are significant in that, between February 1983 and February 1984, there was a loss of employment of 7,800. To put it correctly, there was an increase in unemployment—the two are not necessarily the same—of 7,800 between February 1983 and February 1984, and for the 12 months ended on 18 February of this year, on figures published today, the increase in unemployment was 420, as against that figure of 7,800.

We have a distinct problem in Northern Ireland which does not exist in the rest of the United Kingdom. I refer to the higher birth rate and, therefore, the need to find additional jobs. The birth rate is between 40 and 50 per cent. higher than in the rest of the country. Accordingly, the percentage of 18-year-olds in Northern Ireland is that much greater than the average for the United Kingdom.

Linked with that is a decrease in emigration. No disrespect is meant when one says that the biggest export from both parts of Ireland for a long time has been manpower and womanpower. However, unless people can offer distinctive skills—the very people we want to keep —it is unlikely that they will be able to go to other countries. Thus, with decreasing emigration and the birth rate being between 40 and 50 per cent. higher, the problem of finding work as the additional people grow up is a serious one.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Minister may feel encouraged if I share with him an experience of mine in the last four weeks, when I have met no fewer than seven constituents who have returned, having previously emigrated, they thought permanently. They have returned to Northern Ireland on the grounds that it is not such a bad place after all.

Dr. Boyson: That helps to illustrate the problems that we are facing. By all means encourage people to return, but let us be sure that we can absorb them in the economy when they come back. I accept that there is a distinct tendency in the direction to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—and he spoke of having talked to seven people. But the story he related can be found at other than what one might call ordinary levels of employment.

A distinct number of people are coming back to Northern Ireland to senior managerial posts. Basically,

that is a vote of confidence in the Province, and in that respect I support what the right hon. Gentleman said. About three weeks ago I met the new personnel director to John Parker at Harland and Wolff. Having worked elsewhere in Great Britain, the new personnel man has returned to the Province. The more people return, the more work we have to find, but we want them to come back.

Unemployment is stabilising, but the high birth rate and lack of emigration cause problems. The internal migration figures are interesting. This time next week I shall have the figures so that we shall know where we stand. The figures represent a vote of confidence in the Province. A number of overseas company representatives, particularly from America, say that they have difficulty in persuading people to go to Northern Ireland, but that once they are there they cannot get them out. They like the education system, the leisure facilities and the warmth and hospitality offered by the people. Co-operation exists at all levels in the companies based in Northern Ireland.

The House will be relieved to hear that I do not intend to speak about all provisions sought in the Supplementary Estimates. I shall concentrate on the major items. Hon. Members can ask questions about any issues covered in the order and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will reply later. If he cannot give the answers today, he will write to hon. Members.

I draw attention to a common element in six of the 24 Votes which the Estimates cover. I refer to receipts from the European Community under the urban renewal regulation. The order provides for the receipt of £14·2 million of the second tranche of aid which in full amounts to about £19·8 million and which was approved by the European Commission in November. The assistance has been earned by 91 publicly funded infrastructure projects in the greater Belfast area and has enabled the Government to increase their planned expenditure on urban renewal, including housing.

The previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made housing a priority, particularly in Belfast. The present Secretary of State has maintained that priority.

Only this week my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) took a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House to Northern Ireland. Two of them spoke to me during the Division tonight and said how different the housing situation was now compared with four years ago. Northern Ireland has a lot going for it. I agree that it is a time of disaster and alarm and the last few weeks have brought sadness to all of us, but there is much that can be said in favour of Northern Ireland.

Under Class II, £3·5 million of the £4·4 million extra sought under Vote 1 is to fund an increased number of alterations and extensions to existing factories. The policy in Northern Ireland has been to build advanced factories so that when outside employers come in, or a firm expands in the Province, a factory is available for rent or sale. Many of those factories are open and nobody works in them, so I queried that Vote. I wondered whether we should be building more factories when many were not being used. However, there has been a higher than expected level of investment by a number of companies in Northern Ireland, including the American company AVX which is now Europe's leading manufacturer of multi-layer ceramic capacitors. I trust that everyone knows what they are.

Some additional funds are also required following the Industrial Development Board's decision to proceed with the development of a new science park near Antrim. That development is designed to encourage, in particular, new investment in high technology in Northern Ireland. The extra money is needed for the adaptation of existing factories. I am sure that all hon. Members will approve of that expenditure.

In Class II, Vote 2, an extra £6·9 million is sought. A total of £1·9 million is for interest grants on borrowings for industrial modernisation and reorganisation and about £3·8 million is required by the IDB to meet loan commitments arising from a number of major new investments during the year. Again, the money is being spent on existing firms to give them help. Aircraft Furnishings and Vantona Viyella are examples of the companies which will benefit from that movement of money.

Under Vote III, expenditure on standard capital grants will rise from £37·5 million to £54 million. This reflects a continuation of the trend for a higher level of investment in manufacturing, indicating once again improved business confidence in the Province. I have quoted from a report by PA Management Consultations which says that firms in the sample taken invested 17 per cent. more this year than last year in their plants. Next year they expect to employ 2 per cent. more workers. Signs of optimism are there.

However, part of the increase can also be attributed to investment being brought forward in the knowledge that the standard capital grant scheme is under review. That scheme in Northern Ireland is analogous to the former regional development grant scheme in the assisted areas of Great Britain. A new regional development grant scheme was introduced in Great Britain in November 1984. The Northern Ireland scheme has been reviewed in the light of the significant changes already made in the Great Britain equivalent. I hope to be able to announce the outcome of that review in the near future.

Class III of the Spring Supplementary Estimates covers energy. Following the decision not to proceed with the Kinsale gas project, a new sub-heading, B3, is being introduced in Vote 1 to enable the Northern Ireland Gas Company Ltd to repay loans issued during the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85.

In September 1984, the Government announced that they would not be proceeding with proposals for natural gas to be supplied to Northern Ireland from the Kinsale field in the Republic of Ireland because the project no longer afforded the prospect of economic viability. Provision is being made to enable the orderly rundown and closure of those gas undertakings which decided themselves that they were unable to continue without financial support from the Government.

Under Class III, Vote 2, an extra £5 million is sought to increase the electricity tariff subsidy to the Northern Ireland electricity service. This service is heavily dependent on oil for electricity generation. Since oil is priced in dollars, the movement in the sterling-dollar exchange rate sharply increased the price of that fuel and there has been a consequent increase in electricity service costs.

The Government remain concerned about the ever-increasing cost of the tariff subsidy, and about the extent to which it restricts the funds available for other Government programmes in Northern Ireland. In the Estimates for next year we are calculating that £95 million will be required to subsidise the electricity industry so that

[Dr. Boyson]

it can peg the price to the highest tariff in Great Britain. If one calculates that the Northern Ireland block is about £4 billion, that means that the subsidy is 2·5 per cent. It escalates each year.

For that reason, we are looking urgently at the options for altering the primary fuel for electricity generation at Kilroot, which would reduce costs and thus reduce the demand for the subsidy.

The Government and the electricity service are also actively following up the potential for reducing the cost of electricity generation through use of the indigenous lignite. The first firing of lignite from the Province took place yesterday. Certain lights and bars on electric fires in Northern Ireland for the first time now take their energy from the native lignite. We hope that that will be a success. The House will be united about that.

In west Belfast, 200 tonnes of lignite, which comes from Crumlin, is being fired. Lignite is black bricks and looks like coal. We have paid for the experiment to be done in Yugoslavia and the material is then brought back to be fired. The experiment will prove whether hard lignite from Crumlin can be made into bricks by a process that is used in other European countries. It could then be used in the west Belfast power station. It could also be used in the Kilroot power station if we decided to change to coal and then to lignite. The experiment has no bearing on the use of soft lignite in a possible minemouth station in Crumlin. It would be moved directly into the power station. The making of the bricks — we cannot send lignite to Yugoslavia, although committees may visit regularly to see how it is done—means that we, private enterprise or the Northern Ireland electricity authority will have to build a plant to make the bricks if we use lignite in the Kilroot and west Belfast power stations. The experiment has no bearing on whether we can build the minemouth plant. That will have to be tried elsewhere.

Northern Ireland has a highly developed roads system which is of great importance to the industrial and commercial life of the Province. In order to maintain this valuable asset, the roads programme requires, in Class IV Vote 1, a net supplement of £4·2 million for both capital expenditure and the operation and maintenance of the roads, bridges and lighting.

I should now like to turn to housing, to which I have referred already, which continues to be the top priority among Northern Ireland's social and environmental programmes. The net increase in Class V, Vote 1 of some £9·5 million in the provision for housing services can be attributed mainly to an additional sum of £6 million to enable the Housing Executive to repay certain building society loans, and to an increase in the level of expenditure on house renovation grants in response to rising demand.

On education, the supplementary provision sought for the education services in Class VIII, Vote 1 relates primarily to the increased salary costs arising from the teachers' April 1984 pay award of 5·1 per cent. The overall number of approved teaching posts in schools, including the voluntary grammar schools, in the current school year is 18,615, which will permit the existing overall pupil-teacher ratio to be maintained.

Increased provision of just under £1 million is also made in this Vote for capital grants to schools under voluntary management, and will allow further progress on certain essential minor works, including health and safety schemes, at these schools. The bulk of this increase, £750,000, has been made possible by the new carry-over arrangements introduced last year, which have permitted a proportion of unexpended capital funds in the Northern Ireland block as a whole to be brought forward from the 1983-84 financial year into 1984-85. Under the scheme, underspending of up to 5 per cent. of the total eligible capital provision may be carried forward from one year to the next.

This year is the first time that that carry-over facility has been in full operation. It is extremely useful because there is nothing worse than having to spend up by the end of the year. In the past, in schools, I had to circulate messages that we would have to spend up by the end of the month and asked for suggestions. It is not an ideal situation, especially when two weeks later one discovers that one wants something desperately after one has just spent money on something much less important. In all Votes, 5 per cent. of the total eligible capital provision can be carried forward from one year to another. That means money is spent as it should be spent and not in haste at the end of March.

The carry-over facility has proved to be a most welcome addition to the Secretary of State's flexibility. As well as the Department of Education, three other Northern Ireland Departments have benefited this year: the Department of the Environment carried over into this year £1·6 million, the Department of Economic Development carried over £2 million and the Department of Health and Social Services carried over £500,000. Those amounts are included in the additional provision being sought now for those Departments.

Returning to Class VIII, Vote 2, additional provision of £1·8 million is required to make good a deficiency in the anticipated level of receipts from the European social fund in the current financial year. The EC contribution relates to the cost of certain courses of vocational training in the further education sector, expenditure on which is borne both in this Vote and in Class VIII, Vote 4, where a similar adjustment is required. I would emphasise, however, that that does not imply any change in the underlying volume of activity or in the level of EC support, but relates simply to the timing of the receipt of certain contributions now expected to fall in the next financial year.

Indeed, many hon. Members ask why certain moneys have not been paid to their constituents. In many cases we must wait for the EC to give us money before we can pay it out. The fact that we had to transfer receipts from this to next year shows that that is true—not that anyone doubted. All the letters that I have sent to hon. Members —I have sent two this week—are true.

Finally, in this class, may I refer to the supplementary provision of £5·2 million required in Vote IV for grants to the education and library boards. The major element of the increase in this Vote relates to recurrent and capital expenditure on this year's youth training programme, details of which were not finalised until after the Main Estimates were prepared. The increase will bring the total expenditure on the educational element of the youth training programme to more than £10 million, and will allow the further education colleges to offer 2,500 full-time places and 7,500 part-time places. I am sure that every hon. Member is anxious that we should provide all the youth training that we can. We are also anxious that it is the right sort of training and that it helps the young

people to get jobs afterwards. It is not merely a case of filling in time for one or two years to keep young people off the streets, as we used to say in the north of England; it is important that there is a purpose attached to training. It is helpful to link such training with further education colleges. The Vote will allow 10,000 more people to be involved this year.

On health and social services, the supplementary estimate for Class IX, Vote 1 seeks net additional resources of £3·2 million. The main reason for the increase is to take account of pay settlements the additional costs of which have attracted, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, partial assistance from the contingency reserve. Within the provision, an additional £800,000 net has been provided for capital projects and £500,000 has also been made available which will permit the replacement of medical equipment for regional specialties at the Royal Victoria hospital.

Vote 2 is one of a number of Votes in which the House will find a "token" provision of £1,000. In this Vote there has been an increase of almost £3 million in the cost of medical and ophthalmic services, due to the extra cost of providing those services, and increased demand for them. However, this £3 million increase is offset by a reduction in the provision for pharmaceutical services, and also by higher receipts than expected from the contributions paid by employers and employees towards the cost of the Health Service.

The overall effect of these pluses and minuses is that the original provision is adequate. However, in order to draw the attention of the House to the significant changes in the costs of the elements within the Vote, it is necessary to seek a token Supplementary Estimate of £1,000. The fact that has been included shows that we have open government in Northern Ireland. If it had not been included, hon. Members would not be able to debate the items. Perhaps hon. Members may not wish to debate them —Ministers do not wish to. We have included these items as a service to the public and to open government, and so that hon. Members can rise to it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I appreciate how this is fully understood by all hon. Members who are present.

Finally, in the social security programme, an additional £2·7 million is being sought in Class X, Vote 4, for administration and miscellaneous services. Additional provision is required for salaries and wages, charges for agency services and for the additional costs of the inquiry into children's homes and hostels.

I have tried to outline briefly the main features of the draft order and to give hon. Members an appreciation of the reasons for the changes in provision. I shall listen with great interest to the points raised by hon. Members, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will reply. I commend the draft order to the House.

8.39 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Debates on Appropriation Orders occupy, to some extent, the same place in relation to economic affairs in Northern Ireland as the Budget statement, the debate on the Finance Bill and the Appropriation Bill occupy for the United Kingdom as a whole. We may argue whether it is sensible to review the United Kingdom economy and to decide financial policy as part of a mystic ritual once a year, but it is right that the Government should give some account of their stewardship and answer debates from time to time. I would have hoped that the Government's business managers would have accorded Northern Ireland something more than half a Thursday evening for that purpose.

The Minister predicted that I would destroy the harmony in the Chamber. His predictions are not always justified in the event, but on this occasion he is 100 per cent. accurate. The provision which the order seeks to make and the needs for which it is intended to provide must be assessed against one all-pervading fact: that the much-heralded economic recovery never made a personal appearance. It has been replaced by alibis, scapegoats and grasping at straws. For the people of Northern Ireland, the better future has not materialised.

In January, 123,105 people were claiming unemployment benefit, and even the laundered figures cannot conceal that that is 861 more than a year earlier. If I understood the Minister correctly at Question Time this afternoon, and again this evening, the figures are a little better for February, as we would expect. This time, we are only 420 worse than last year. He made the most of that information. I do not blame him, because he does not have much good news to announce, but we had all that song and dance about the fact that we are only 420 jobs worse off than we were last year.

If we compare the number of job promotions by the Industrial Development Board and LEDU with the number of people qualifying for statutory redundancy payments, we find that they are running hard but failing to maintain the same place. In 1984, 7,214 jobs were promoted, while 8,378 people qualified for redundancy payments. No doubt I will be told that I am spreading alarm and despondency. But there is alarm and despondency in Northern Ireland, and we must face the fact in this debate. The people I meet, who are not company executives, are worried about their future, and if the malady is not diagnosed, we shall continue to be short on prescriptions.

What is especially worrying is the failure to absorb people qualified in the new technologies. On 22 February, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that, last year, there were 72 graduates from Queen's university in electrical studies and electronic engineering. Twelve were overseas students who returned home. Of the remaining 60, only 27 found jobs in Northern Ireland. Yet they are the people on whom an economic recovery will depend.

A measure of the waste can be found by comparing expenditure on the social programme with expenditure on industrial development. The Government's expenditure plans, which, as the Minister said, were published in January, reveal that, since 1979, the Government have spent more than £5 billion on social security in Northern Ireland. Of course, we do not complain about the Government meeting people's needs, given that those needs exist. But in the same period they spent less than £2 billion on industry, energy and employment promotion. Had they tackled those problems more effectively, the need would not have reached anything like those proportions. This is the philosophy of spending money to keep people unemployed instead of spending it to get them to work.

We still hear the argument that to attract industry to Northern Ireland the Province must be able to offer what is euphemistically called "wages flexibility", which means that people must be so desparate that they are prepared to work for less than employers must pay anywhere else. That has been put to the test in Northern Ireland. In 1982, 27 per cent. of men in full-time employment earned less

[Mr. Peter Archer]

than £100 a week compared with only 17 per cent. in Great Britain. That did not bring jobs crowding into Northern Ireland. Everyone agrees that in skills, willingness to work, loyalty and perfomance, the workers of Northern Ireland bear comparison with workers anywhere. But if the Government abdicate their responsibilities in favour of market forces, there will be no rewards for those workers.

May I put some concrete suggestions to the Minister as to how the Government could help Northern Ireland to break out of that vicious downward spiral? First, has he seen the 1983-84 annual report of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, which points out that the incentive schemes for employers are not always incentives to create jobs? The capital grants scheme is dispensed with no apparent assessment of its impact on job creation, and the congress suggested that the Government should replace it with an employment grants scheme, where the grants would be based on the number of employment years that would result from each pound spent. It also suggested a tighter monitoring system to ensure that the money was not siphoned off to associated companies or to outside creditors.

Secondly, the Government could match the need of the unemployed for work with the need for work to be done in the public sector. The proposals in Class V, of which the Minister spoke, reflect the Government's intention to reduce by 750 the number of housing starts made by the Housing Executive as against starts in the previous year. This is at a time when the Housing Executive's waiting list is apparently growing. There were 1,000 more names on the list in September 1984 than there were in March 1984. The Housing Executive states in its annual report that one third of its applicants have been waiting for at least four years.

As I understand it—the Under-Secretary of State will tell me whether it is right when he replies — the Government explain that by saying that, instead of undertaking an energetic house-building programme, they are concentrating on improving the existing stock. We would not complain about that if the Government showed more energy in enforcing standards in the private sector. It is true that the tenant of a house in need of repair may apply for a repair grant, but in practice it will not be provided unless the landlord consents. Many landlords are not prepared to consent because they will not be permitted to increase the rent if they have made no contribution to the cost of the repairs, and because some of them are anxious to make the tenancy as unpleasant as possible in order to obtain possession.

The Belfast law centre has proposed to the Government several changes in the law to make such enforcement more effective. If I were to reherese them today, my speech would be inordinately long, but I hope that the Government at least see the merit of paying people to build or improve houses in preference to paying them to eat their hearts out on the dole.

May I offer a further example of matching jobs to needs? The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland —the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten)—admitted in a parliamentary answer on 5 December that the entire class of 41 nurses who were due to complete their training at the Royal Victoria hospital in December would face unemployment, and that of 13 nurses who recently completed their training at Ards hospital, only four have been offered permanent jobs. That is not because hospit in Northern Ireland are over-manned, but because there no money to pay the nurses. The number of peo provided with home helps by the Eastern health board by 1,231 in 1983-84, not because people have less ne for home helps, but because the authority could provide them out of the money which the Government h made available.

The problems of the Eastern health board are known Ministers and to all hon. Members. It must provide £ million for the 1984 pay award; it has been asked to ma efficiency savings of £1·4 million; it will need a furth £1 million to cope with population changes; and it ha bill for a further £1 million from the north and west Belf districts. The Government have provided some ne money, but it will be completely absorbed by the co imposed by reason of the new tower block at Belfast c hospital. So there will be growing unemployment amo Health Service employees at a time when the sic measured by the number receiving sickness and invalid benefits, is 66 per cent. higher than the number in Gre Britain, when the incidence of severe disablement is 35 p cent. higher, when the rates of infant mortality, congeni deformity, mental handicap and mental illness are higher than in Great Britain.

If people were paid to meet those needs instead of bei paid to remain unemployed, the Government would going some way towards dealing with both problem Until then, there is a vicious circle. Construction worke nurses and home helps are unemployed while health a housing needs are not met. And because so many peop are unemployed, Northern Ireland is an area deprivation. That, in turn, is reflected in further strain the health and housing services.

Until employment opportunities are provided Northern Ireland, it will remain an area where very ma people are living on very low incomes. In 1982, t average gross income per head in Northern Ireland w only 70 per cent. of the average for the United Kingdo It is against that background that the House has to jud the proposals in Class III, particularly items 1 and 2 whi the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyso mentioned in his speech.

We are indebted to the report of the Assembly on soci security parity, to which I should very much like to pa tribute, for some illuminating information on the cost domestic fuels. Of the four most readily available sourc of fuel—coal, oil, gas and electricity—two, coal a oil, cost about the same in Northern Ireland as in the re of the United Kingdom. But coal is no longer very wide used in Great Britain, partly because it is not an efficie method of heating domestic space. Of coal burned in fire only 35 per cent. of the heat generated is consume usefully. So, although coal is a cheap fuel if we calcula it in terms of the therms generated, if, instead, w calculate it in terms of the therms usefully consumed compares badly with other fuels for domestic heating. Y in Northern Ireland coal takes 42·4 per cent. of the mark in domestic fuels, compared with 10·4 per cent. in Gre Britain. So we begin with householders in Northe Ireland largely committed to an inefficient and therefo an expensive method of heating.

The next most widely used fuel is electricity. We ha discussed the price of electricity so often that I shall n presume to relate to the House facts of which it obviously well aware. Suffice it to say that the price

electricity in Northern Ireland, as the Minister of State reminded us, is equated with the price in the highest priced region in Great Britain. That means 10 per cent. higher than the average price for Great Britain. The consequence was that in 1983, while the average household in Great Britain spent £8·80 per week on fuel, in Northern Ireland the average household spent £13·10—49 per cent. more out of a substantially lower total income. This impinges most heavily on the most vulnerable groups, particularly pensioners. In January, the Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society estimated that one third of Northern Ireland's pensioners live in inadequately heated accommodation and that about 20,000 are at risk from hypothermia.

What proposals have we had from the Government tonight, or any night, to deal with this tragic situation? Their document, "Northern Ireland Energy Issues", published in July 1983, which we have discussed on previous occasions, contains this revealing indication of their view of the Government's role:

"to set a framework which will ensure that the market operates in the energy sector with the minimum of distortion and that energy is produced and consumed efficiently."

That is a classical definition of monetarism — the abdication of the Government and the magic of the market.

I should like to commend to the Minister, if he has not seen it, a publication called "Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland". It is published by the Northern Ireland Right to Fuel Campaign. It suggests a number of measures which could help. First, it suggests a fuel allowance, payable to members of those groups which are knows to be most vulnerable: those in receipt of retirement pensions, invalidity benefits and the severe disablement allowance. Secondly, it suggests that efforts should be made to bring natural gas as an option to consumers in Northern Ireland. I was a little disappointed with what the Minister said about that tonight.

Following the Government's announcement last year that they were not proposing to proceed with the Kinsale project, the Northern Ireland Gas Employers Board and the gas trade union group prepared a report suggesting a less ambitious project. As he will recollect, I wrote to the hon. Gentleman urging him to give it serious consideration, and in the course of a courteous reply he said two things. First, he said that he was not happy about the assessment of the operating costs and the marketing prospects, but he said that he accepted that the working group wished to take independent advice on the proposals. Secondly, he said that he was not prepared to countenance any option which entailed a continuing subsidy towards the price of gas.

Independent advice was taken, taken from Coopers and Lybrand and from Congas Engineering. That report confirms that the scheme could offer gas to the people of Belfast at a price 25 per cent. below the current price. It confirms that over a period of five years the scheme would be self-financing, with a positive return of £159 million. I heard today from the hon. Gentleman that he had not yet officially seen that document. I hope that he will make arrangements to try to see it.

Dr. Boyson: It would help if that report were to be sent to us, but we are still waiting for it. It is very difficult to be attacked for disagreeing with a report when we have not even seen it.

Mr. Archer: Far be it from me to attack the hon. Gentleman in any sense for disagreeing with the report. I did not say that he disagreed with it. I am grateful to him for pointing out that he has not yet seen the report. I believe that the group intend to base further recommendations upon it before they submit it to the hon. Gentleman. However, when the time comes I hope that he will give very serious consideration to it.

The hon. Gentleman pointed out that the order provides for closures in the gas industry. If the gas industry has to be closed down, the cost to the Government, in addition to the penalty imposed on consumers in Northern Ireland, will be between £100 million and £120 million. It would swell yet further the ranks of skilled, loyal workers who are eating out their hearts on the dole. So a short-term commitment to the public financing that is necessary for this purpose would bear a double fruit. It would make available to consumers an attractive option at prices that they could afford, and it would ensure employment for the work force.

Thirdly, the Right to Fuel Campaign report suggests that the Government might assist further with the cost of insulating homes and that that should be restructured from the present system. There are two problems about the existing grants. First, since the householder has to find a proportion of the cost, those on the lowest incomes are unable to take full advantage of them. Secondly, it is less cost-effective to insulate the odd house here and there than to cover a whole estate in one project—in fact, about half as cost-effective. It would be a saving in the medium or long term to provide proper insulation for all houses which fail to meet basic standards, irrespective of any means testing of the occupiers.

Finally, a restructuring is proposed of electricity prices to ease the burden of standing charges, especially for those who are dependent upon district heating. Some tenants are paying £11 a week in electricity bills before they consume one unit of electricity.

If the Government were prepared to take some or all of those measures, it is unlikely that we would see many decent families, not lacking in honesty or providence, getting into loads of debt which become unmanageable.

But if we are discussing human misery and despair, there is a further measure which needs to be taken in relation to those who fall into debt. In 1971 there was a rent and rates strike. The occasion and the merits of it are now matters for the historians but the consequences of it are still with us. The Government of the day responded by placing on the statute book the Payment for Debt Act, or, to accord it its full name, which is now without significance, the Payment for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. It is a draconian measure which provides that any Government or public authority which is owed money by an individual may pay it and shall pay it, if the Department of Finance and Personnel so directs, in settlement of any sum appearing to be due—not proved to be due or even shown to be due—to anyone, in respect of sums due for rates, taxes, payment of public services or payment for accommodation.

The authority, or the Department of Finance and Personnel will be the sole arbiter of whether the debt is owed, how much is owing and what the debtor can afford to pay. The only concession to the judicial process is that the debtor may go to the county court after the event. If he can satisfy the court that no debt was owing, the court may order the money to be refunded, apparently without interest. The burden of proof that money was not owed is

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on the debtor and if the court finds that the bureaucracy took money that was not owing, it may—not must—order the bureaucracy to pay it back out of the goodness of its heart, or to credit the sum against some future debt. It would be hard to envisage a measure which placed citizens more completely at the mercy of the bureaucracy. It applies without qualification to those who are dependent for their incomes on payment from the Government or public authorities, many of whom are by definition those on low incomes.

Those who are employed by public authorities are subjected to a liability which is not shared by those in private employment. No limit is set on the proportion of the payment which may be appropriated or on the minimum which should be left for the individual to live on. There is no procedure for examining a person's means before a decision is made. The court has power to intervene only if the debt itself is disputed, and then only after the event. The only duty to give notice is that the person concerned must be informed by post that a deduction is to be made.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The House may think that there is some validity in many of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's arguments. However, many hon. Members will recognise the need for some provision to stop the state paying money to those who owe money to it. If the Act to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has referred is so bad, why did the Labour Government of which he was a member do nothing to remove it from the statute book?

Mr. Archer: That question was not wholly unexpected. The reason for my own inactivity is that I was unaware of the Act at that time. If I spent my time trying to defend every measure which the Government of which I was a member left on the statute book, not very much progress would be made in Northern Ireland. The same could be said by any member of any previous Government. I am not suggesting that Governments should continue unreservedly to pay money week after week, month after month and year after year to those who owe money to them. I am merely suggesting that there might be a more compassionate and fairer approach. For example, some judicial process might intervene at an earlier stage. I hope to carry the hon. Gentleman with me to that extent for I believe that he is a compassionate man.

Reverend Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Surely the blame rests on those politicians who said, "Go on a rent and rates strike and you will never have to pay." That advice was in their literature. It is those politicians who need to be castigated. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) helped to organise the rent and rates strike.

Mr. Archer: It is part of folklore that the English never remember and the Irish never forget. The strike took place a long time ago. I do not seek to join issue with the hon. Gentleman on matters of history. We are in 1985 and some of those who are suffering were children or were not even born when the strike took place. The emergency provisions for the payment of debt distinguish Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom. If one lives in Birmingham or Halifax, the Act cannot apply to one. If one lives in Belfast or Derry, one is subject to it.

The dangers are not wholly theoretical. I ha quoted the case of a woman, who is a single paren left with £20 a week to keep herself and one child, is only one example. The Assembly — again tribute to it—passed a resolution in May 1984 for

"a review of the debt legislation in Northern Irelan particular reference to the Payment of Debt Act".

So far as I am aware, there has been no response f Government to that invitation. If I am wrong, I s happy to be corrected.

My criticism of the order is that it reflects a package of policies that offer no comfort to the N Ireland people. They are already disadvanta comparison with Great Britain because of what ha many years ago. Those policies do not add up to a r Worse, they are the very policies which, during t six years, have resulted in the present state of indus employment.

It is true that the order reflects a substantial sub by the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland, b subvention is necessary largely because the N Ireland people are denied the right to work produc goods to meet their needs. Of course we shall not against the order. It would be silly to register a against inadequate provision by voting again provision at all, but we share in the indignation fel many people in Northern Ireland. Unemplo poverty, deprivation and frustration are not inev they are the consequences of Government polici political decisions. While direct rule continue decisions are made by a Government which was sense chosen by the Northern Ireland people. The p of both traditions have a common interest in fin better way of ordering their future.

9.6 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): In speak the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, again acknowledge the Government's efforts in fin activities in the Province and the dedication of various Northern Ireland Ministers to their resp portfolios, in spite of the sometimes unreas criticisms to which they are subjected from time to

The subjects in the order are wide and varied. reflect the scope of the requirements of the Provinc I am more interested in the matters relating to the Belfast, especially to my constituency of Belfast, N which has suffered considerably as a result of civil causing serious deprivation in many areas.

Class II, Vote 1, section D details current expen in relation to the Industrial Development Board. I be naive or dishonest if I did not appreciate the fin help and advice that the board has given to industries. I am concerned that the board, in its enthu to help, can be severely criticised for not inq sufficiently into some of the applications. The evidence that vast sums of money have been gran companies to set up businesses which then competed similar business already in operation and which were than able to cater for existing market demand. consequence, there have been redundancies and shor working in these businesses, and sometimes there been closures.

In my constituency, a long-established chemical has suffered because of grants given to one of its f

employees. There is another case where an entire door factory has closed, and another factory is now considering a three-day week because of grants given to a company to start up this type of business outside Belfast. Cheap imports from Spain, Portugal and the Irish Republic have decimated the door market in Northern Ireland. When the Government are not seen to be protecting the working population from the effects of these pirates, who are dumping goods on our markets, the activities of the Industrial Development Board, in adding to the problem, are to be condemned. Such incompetence does not produce any new jobs.

I am pleased to note that in Class II, Vote 3 the Government have recognised the value of the aircraft and shipbuilding industries to our Province. The provision of consultancy and advice to those industries must be welcomed. We all know that those two industries are competitive, and the record and dedication of their management and work forces must be admired. They are worthy of our full co-operation. I was somewhat alarmed to see in Vote 5 that the number of shipbuilding redundancies has been larger than anticipated. We must streamline operations to increase competitiveness, but there can be a hidden danger if we lose too many skilled operators through voluntary redundancies.

In Class II, Vote 3, I fully support the energy efficiency and other support services. The loft insulation scheme has been a success in Northern Ireland, and minimising heat loss has contributed to the economy in real terms.

I am sorry that the Local Enterprise Development Unit has not had the response for its services that was expected. That unit has been one of the most successful in creating jobs. The widening of its scope to cater for the service industries is welcome and has given a great uplift to my constituency by helping those who are setting up in the enterprise zones and providing much needed jobs in what was originally a virtual wasteland.

In Class II Vote 6, I am glad to note that recognition has been given to the fact that, because of their insular position, small private companies in Northern Ireland might not have the knowledge and business application to make the best use of their resources. The provision of consultancy grants through the European regional development fund is welcome. It will make such companies more viable in the present economic climate.

Class III deals with subsidies to electricity tariffs. The Secretary of State said when announcing the subsidy:

> "This commitment is becoming an increasing strain on resources, and the demands of the electricity subsidy compete directly with other programmes for resources within the Northern Ireland block."

I remind the Minister that the high cost of electricity generated in Northern Ireland is due to many factors of which he is aware and over which we in the Province have no control. As citizens of the United Kingdom subscribing to the Exchequer of our mother country, we are not to be treated as beggars. We are paying far more for fuel of all descriptions than are our fellow citizens in Great Britain. Although electricity is subsidised, it is still more expensive than in most other regions. The Government have the power to introduce cheaper energy. I am glad that they have tried that with lignite, but they should not patronise a population which suffers more than most from its energy consumption.

In Class IV, Vote 1, it is encouraging to note that the Minister has responded to the pleas of many public representatives about the condition and lighting of some of our roads. Provision is being made for extra expenditure on those necessary works. As the Minister is aware, there have been many complaints about those matters. It is a point that has been recognised by providing in section E for hefty sums of compensation for damage to property or injury to persons arising out of the Department's responsibility as a road authority.

There are several headings under Class V about which one could speak. The housing grant system has been successful in updating and preserving the Province's housing stock. It is reassuring to note that that fact has been recognised by the provision of extra resources to cater for the existing demand. Unfortunately, there are still what many applicants will say are unacceptable delays in the processing of applications. That causes great frustration for all concerned.

In connection with the grants, I am still very concerned about the cowboy element in the building trade. That element is being encouraged by the addition of 15 per cent. VAT on all building alternations. I agree with a recent suggestion by the Building Federation Association that the VAT net should be widened to take in all firms in the construction industry, no matter how small. That would help to stamp out this area of the black economy—the growth of unfair competition by unscrupulous builders who are avoiding registration for VAT.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): When a constituent has difficulties in obtaining a grant for what, on the face of it, seems to be perfectly proper work, the reason often is that the person whom he intends to employ has given him bad advice and drawn up plans not calculated to comply with the requirements of the Housing Executive.

Mr. Walker: I quite agree with my right hon. Friend. It is the cowboys who are not able to cope with the trade who create such situations.

I note that the Housing Executive proposes new controls to govern the employment of subcontractors, to try to ensure higher standards of workmanship. If the new rules were extended to include builders involved in grant work, there would be more protection both for the executive and for the owner who lacks the necessary experience to ensure that the job is completed to a satisfactory standard. Such work should be awarded only to a contractor who has a valid tax exemption certificate and is registered for VAT.

I am still concerned about the lack of progress in many areas of North Belfast of the building and rehabilitation programmes. I do not criticise the Under-Secretary of State, who has always been very helpful in all housing matters. I am concerned about that bureaucratic and monolithic organisation known as the Housing Executive. To my mind—I suspect that many other hon. Members and public representatives would agree with me—that organisation is not fulfilling its function in the community.

Over 75 per cent. of the complaints that I receive from long-suffering constituents relate to the Housing Executive. There are allegations that controllers are not controlling and that managers are not managing. The only office with a record of sympathy and understanding is the one at 71 Royal avenue, Belfast. I wish to pay a personal tribute to the manager and staff of that office, who have

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never failed to answer queries and to take up points made by any public representatives. That office's provision of new build and upgrading is the best in north Belfast.

A new formal system for dealing with complaints has now been set up, but to date I have received no evidence that the system is working. A constituent advised me the other day that she had had to wait five weeks to see a housing officer at the Housing Executive office. I am concerned that by introducing such formality we will penalise the elderly and confused who may not understand the formal requirements for lodging a complaint. We need mannerly and co-operative housing assistants who will listen attentively to the problem and process it through the system in a workmanlike manner.

During the Appropriation debate last year I mentioned some plots of land in north Belfast which I believed could be developed for housing. The land is still there, but there seems to be a reluctance to develop it, at least for housing. The situation is especially bad in the Shankill area, where large tracts of land originally vested for housing are still dormant and desolate, especially in the areas RDA 11/33 and RDA 12/13. Public representatives have vociferously condemned the executive for dragging its feet in providing well-designed and good quality homes for Shankill families who are still living in unfit houses which were built at the turn of the century.

I am also worried about allegations that plans are afoot to use housing land to provide hospital facilities and large car parks around Eglington flats in the Crumlin road. That would permanently deprive 50 to 60 Shankill families of a home of their own in their own area. The Belfast housing strategy has greatly increased the number of Shankill dwellings that are due for demolition. So far, the Housing Executive has failed to tell the community where the redevelopment victims will be housed. It is only right to highlight the housing shortage and the imminent crisis in the Shankill area arising from redevelopment proposals.

Will the Minister ensure that Shankill housing land is used to provide homes, and is not used as wasteland for dumping, large car parks or, more ominously, to support schemes for the use of non-residents? Woodvale and Shankill housing association applied for permission to develop a prime piece of land on Agnes street for a small sheltered development. The land is close to all amenities and would be ideal for such a development. On investigation, it was revealed that it has been reserved for environmental works. That revelation only strengthens the belief that there is little Government commitment to provide for the people of the area. I trust that the Minister will investigate the allegations, and I hope that the land will be transferred back to housing. Open spaces and environmental works in that area are havens for hooligans, drinkers and glue sniffers, who practise their nefarious activities and then go forth to terrorise the neighbourhood.

I am pleased to advise the Minister that, after some time, site clearance has at last commenced in RDA87 in the Bray street—Ohio street complex. The district needs a crash programme of housing and rehabilitation to alleviate the terrible deprivation there. The Minister knows that many accusations of religious discrimination have been levelled at the executive for its inaction in that Protestant enclave. That is especially so when brand new houses are being supplied for Roman Catholic neighbours on the other side of the Crumlin road. The efforts of the Woodvale and Shankill housing association to so problems of the area are being thwarted by the mir Stormont. That adds further to the impression that a conspiracy to deprive that section of the popula its basic rights. I hope that the Minister will respon plea to meet the officers of that association so t many and varied complaints can be aired at first

When the Minister announced his housing bud said that private developers were to be responsi building the bulk of Ulster's new homes and t executive's primary role would be to mainta improve existing stock. Although I encourage ownership, I am aware that current levels of une ment in the Province mean that many families do n the opportunity to avail themselves of home own They have no option but to register for Housing Ex accommodation or to become tenants in the private sector. It is generally recognised that private tenant the worst housing conditions in the Province.

I welcome the setting up of a private tenants asso and hope that the Government will assist it to hel who are forced to live in accommodation such as mentioned, which often has a poor level of ameniti no proper standards of repair and safety. Enthusi support the private developer and to encourage him Housing Executive land is not altogether satisfactor led to believe that the development in Northumb street is not coming up to expectations, in tha appears to be little interest from the community. Ho there is a long list of applications for housing in the sector at the local executive office. The executive h handed over land at Manor street for private develo I predict that there will be little interest in that as

It would be much better if people could ever purchase their executive home, which is built to standard, by applying the historic cost of the age house, as opposed to the date of the letting.

I now turn to Class VI, Vote 2, and mention the to community advice groups. While this grant co beneficial in connection with advising the commun take-up benefits, care will have to be exercised to that such grants cannot be applied and used by mi political parties in their desire to ingratiate them with the electorate.

In the same Vote, mention is made of itinerant ca sites. There have been many problems and difficul Belfast in trying to help this section of the populati must be accepted that itinerant populations h wandering inclination, and the experiment of pro the settlement in Springfield road was a dismal and failure. Full and frank discussion with these people s be the order of the day to ascertain whether anythin be done for them and whether the community in the where their camps are to be put will accept them.

I refer now to Class VIII, section B, where pro is made for nursery schools. The decision to int nursery schools into neighbouring primary schools always the best one, for many reasons. I am partic concerned about the transfer of Edenderry nursery s to Glenwood primary school, which I feel is a retro step. It would have been much more acceptable Minister with responsibility for education had at inspected the school himself before taking his dec especially as the inspectorate had recommended th school should be allowed to remain. The Minister has misinformed regarding the play area to be provide

these children. The headmaster of Glenwood school cannot give any more space, and the space available does not conform to the established criteria.

Parents and teachers in north Belfast have suffered traumatically through the rationalisation of their schools, and this further step in destroying nursery facilities is causing great dissention in the community, to the detriment of the Government. The Minister will, I am sure, forgive me if I say that this scenario is reminiscent of a "Yes Minister" episode.

Teachers are one of the most supportive influences in the early lives of our children. Now, on top of what they have suffered as a consequence of rationalisation, they are not being recognised in monetary terms. They claim that during the last decade they have fallen about 34 per cent. behind the salary levels of people in similar jobs. There is no doubt in my mind that they have a just case. Salary levels do not reflect the importance of their job or the demands that the community makes on them. Low pay, coupled with falling school rolls, deprives teachers on the bottom pay scale of promotion opportunities. They are very conscious of university contemporaries following careers in commerce or industry who are now earning more and enjoying far better prospects. Is it any wonder that morale is at rock bottom? The Government should show sympathy and understanding to our teachers in what is a legitimate claim. They should recognise that they are being treated unfairly and take steps to redress the imbalance in their salaries.

In winding up my speech, I make reference to Class IX, under health and personal social services. I had the privilege of reading recently a speech by the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland — the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), who is responsible for health—to an invited audience at Queen's university. It was an excellent and most informative speech about the future of the Health Service. It is the future of the service, especially relating to the activities of the Eastern health and social services board, responsible for Belfast, which concerns me. I am perturbed to hear that that board is to protest to the Minister about a shortage of cash that is forcing it to find £4·6 million to meet its bills for 1985-86. That naturally poses the question: is the board capable of managing its affairs? The suggestion that radical action would be considered, in the form of job cuts, does not auger well for the future of the service. There is talk about 1,000 ancillary jobs being axed before the end of the year, which would involve staff in catering, laundry, portering, domestic and home help services. Such cuts, if implemented, will further erode health care standards and, in my view, result in ward closures. There will also inevitably be longer waiting lists, and patients in desperate need may not receive treatment.

Within the eastern board the restructuring process has been a ghastly error, which has led only to vastly increasing costs in administrative levels, without providing better service. How anyone could hope to cut costs by creating eight extra units of management defeats me. I understand that there is now extreme dissatisfaction because of the creation of so many senior administrative posts, with the whole run of supporting positions under them, which has resulted only in spiralling costs and a top heavy administrative structure which does less work in a contracting service.

With regard to general medical services, I feel that I must protest at the suggestion that the Government are set to announce a steep increase in prescription charges. It is suggested that it may be as high as 20 per cent., which is well above the rate of inflation. Such an increase will coincide with a rise in charges for dental treatment and is likely to result in a tenfold rise in prescription charges since the Government came to power in 1979. There can be no justification for such methods. To capitalise on the sick and ailing in an attempt to bolster a declining Health Service would be deplorable.

In conclusion, I refer again to the Under-Secretary's speech at Queen's university, when he said:

> "Investment is also required in services for the mentally handicapped and in particular the provision of more residential homes and adult training centres."

Provision for that has also been included in Class IX. Knowing the Minister of State's concern for the problems of the mentally handicapped, and in particular the great sacrifices made by the parents in their care and support of those unfortunate members of their family, I shall relate to him what I believe is the most blatant act of discrimination and criminal negligence ever perpetrated by the eastern board against that underprivileged section of our community in north Belfast. The Minister is aware that north Belfast contains the greatest proportion of mentally handicapped people in the Province. The parent groups have been trying vainly to obtain a proper adult training centre for the past 10 years and have been involved in discussions with the board over that period. In the meantime, to my knowledge, two beautifully equipped training centres have been built, one in Newtownabbey and one in south Belfast.

During the period of office of the last Labour Government — and that was not yesterday — Lord Melchett, who was Minister at the time, set aside the sum of £300,000 under the Belfast areas of need programme especially for the provision of an adult training centre for north Belfast. He instructed the board to proceed with the identification of a site, with subsequent building. Perhaps it proceeded, perhaps it did not, but certainly nothing materialised. It must have been a welcome relief when that Government went out of office and the board could again prevaricate and adopt a negative attitude to the project. Eventually, the intervention of the media embarrassed the board and it roused itself sufficiently to acquire a rundown clinic at Mountcollyer which, at minimum cost, was converted into something which the board presented as a sop to the parents. By superhuman efforts they transformed this so-called facility into an acceptable temporary compromise.

After many more years of feet dragging the board identified a building in York lane which was presented to the parents on a "take it or leave it—there is nothing else" basis. Some parents were so demoralised that they were ready to accept anything, but they should not be forced to take such an unsuitable building as the one now proposed. Bearing in mind that most of the people using such a building are severely handicapped and in constant need of help and support, how can anyone justify a decision by board officers to purchase a building which has the following serious shortcomings?

It is three-storey, requiring emergency evacuation procedures which could not possibly be relied upon with this type of usage. It is situated in an area of Belfast with a high traffic density and restricted parking. It is almost impossible to gain access or egress. More road development is scheduled, which will compound the

[Mr. Walker]

problem. There are security problems in that high-risk area which has had more than its share of emergencies. There is very little natural light in the building. There is no outside area for physical education programmes. There is also an electricity sub-station in the building, which in the past has been a terrorist target. I appeal to the Minister to treat this matter with the utmost urgency. There are many properties, including ground floor school premises in north Belfast, which would be much more suitable. The parents deserve the same facilities as those supplied with Government finance by other agencies. I fully support them.

9.36 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): The people whom I represent have told me that they are sick and tired of hearing about how much Northern Ireland is subsidised by the British Exchequer. We recognise that the public expenditure in Northern Ireland is higher than in other regions of the United Kingdom but we must remember that the position is the same in other parts of the mainland where the less well-off regions receive more in Government expenditure than is gained from the tax revenue from the area.

Attempts to help the less well-off regions through regional policy and the distribution of Government funds have been the mainstay of economic policy in the United Kingdom. Since the second world war, the weaker regions have been helped by the better-off. There should be a redistribution of resources to seek to alleviate regional differences.

The appalling unemployment in the Province and the necessary expenditure on security, as well as the other problems of high infant mortality and appalling housing conditions, can be alleviated only by high levels of public expenditure. We are not asking for special treatment for Northern Ireland. We are simply asking for equal treatment with the rest of the United Kingdom—in other words, the provision throughout of basic British standards for all British citizens.

Some elements of Government policy and the application of Government policy in the Province give grave cause for concern and have caused hardship. Under Class V, in regard to housing, Northern Ireland has been treated very generously. The amount of public expenditure on housing has been welcomed by all elected representatives. However, I am not convinced that those funds are being used in the most efficient manner. My party has always been critical of the way in which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has used the funds which have been made available to it.

This year, despite the fact that we have a waiting list of more than 22,000 people in the Province and that a large proportion of the houses have been declared unfit, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive could not manage to spend all the money allocated to it. It has already handed over at least £11·3 million of this year's budget. By the time April comes, that £11·3 million may be nearer £15 million. That is equivalent to nearly 600 new houses. I can assure hon. Members that such houses are in great demand in some areas of the Province, and especially in Belfast. Indeed, I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and by the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker).

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will my hon. Friend take i me that those houses are most needed in east B which has the highest waiting list in the whole Province?

Rev. William McCrea: I am happy to hav information from my hon. Friend, and I trust th debate will draw the problem to the Housing Exec attention. I believe that the excuses made by the H Executive do not stand up to close scrutiny. With managing of its resources, the money could hav used on schemes which have been delayed time an again.

It is ironic that in a year in which the Housing Exe could not spend all the money allocated to it, it declare that enveloping schemes which had been p for the beginning of the next financial year would h be shelved because of financial difficulties. There be an administrative shake-up in the Northern Housing Executive. Indeed, I should prefer the H Executive to be removed and completely abolishe its affairs returned to the local representatives Province.

In order to deal with situations such as those tha developed this year, the Housing Executive sho instructed to hold a number of schemes which co immediately activated if and when it became appare there would be an underspend of the funds allocated Government in a particular year. The present seems to be that, when an underspend is discovered is a panic trying to identify ways in which the money be spent. As significant sums are involved, that sin not practical. Given the Province's terrible h problems, that is not an efficient way to deal wi resources allocated for housing. Inevitably, it wi only to great disappointment, anger and frustration those who have been kept waiting for many years house.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West Inverclyde): Is my hon. Friend talking about whe would be equitable for the Housing Executive disbanded, or is it just a question of wanting more p influence over it?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend intervention. I served as a member of the board, a the first member of my party to serve on it. But I b that the Housing Executive is too large and unwie is too distant from the general public, and so necessarily give it what it needs. Therefore, I belie its affairs should be returned more to the local auth I do not hear anyone on this side of the water sug that all the powers should be taken from local auth and given to some massive and unwieldy h executive for England, Scotland or Wales. Howe would be interesting if that suggestion was made.

A formal review should be conducted into the h programme to ensure that the correct levels of res are devoted to the building of houses, and that v resources are released for high priority areas at the opportunity for whatever housing area most needs

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Gentleman agree that the highest priority must be g provision for the elderly, for those with ills and for who need ground floor accommodation with ac

central heating? If priority were given to that sector of housing in Northern Ireland, many two and three-bedroomed houses would become available for younger families.

Rev. William McCrea: I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Gentleman. I accept that this section of the community need a large proportion of public housing, yet they do not have adequate provision for their needs. Indeed, real increases should have been made to the maintenance expenditure of the Housing Executive. In my constituency, work is needed at Watson Park and Camowen Bungalows, in Omagh, and other schemes which need urgent attention include Knockloughrim, Carson Villas, Tamlaght O'Crilly and Upperlands. I hope that the Minister will give careful thought to those places, and he might care to write to me about them.

Like me, other hon. Members will have been approached by constituents about problems concerned with response maintenance. I wish that the Housing Executive would be more caring and sympathetic about the maintenance issue. Time and again constituents complain that whenever they approach the Housing Executive, they are told, in effect, "You are at the bottom of the list. The repairs will be done some time."

However, some people in the Province seem to be knocking on the door of the Housing Executive every other day and getting the work done. That group of people seem to be able to wreck their houses and have the Housing Executive van at their homes practically all the time. Against that, a good, honest, honourable citizen who has a problem with his home and has urgent need of response maintence is told that his problem is not urgent.

Time and again I have found that the good tenant seems to be overlooked, while the irresponsible one gets the attention of the staff of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I hope that that situation will change and that people will be encouraged to be good and honourable tenants.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North spoke of cowboy firms who are doing housing repairs. Many of the cowboys are doing what is known as "the double", and their standard of workmanship is deplorable. I have brought to the attention of the Housing Executive the workmanship at Coagh and Stewartstown in County Tyrone. I hope that something will be done to improve the general standard of workmanship and that clerks of work will be employed to watch over the work.

Putting in tenders are firms which employ people who are not tradesmen but who just collect their pay and leave work half done. Too often, such workmen leave behind a mess for others to clear up.

The increasing numbers of elderly and others with special needs make it vital that the voluntary housing effort is maintained and, if possible, enhanced. That sector of housing provides a commendable and worthy contribution to alleviating suffering among a valued section of the Ulster community, and we should pay tribute to the housing associations.

Will the Minister provide an up-to-date report on Orlit homes and aluminium bungalows, both of which are causing tenants grave concern?

Under Class IV, another sector of public expenditure needing an injection of money is capital construction and the improvement of roads and bridges and the maintenance of the road network throughout the Province. The Northern Ireland Economic Council estimates that money spent on capital works and maintenance has declined in real terms by one third since 1973-74. Anyone can see that if anything needs an injection of finance in Northern Ireland it is road maintenance. That money is needed to protect the capital already invested in our road system and to alleviate all other problems.

The money available to maintain 14,683 miles of road is not extravagant compared with expenditure in Great Britain. Steps should be taken to carry out proper repairs to our roads instead of resorting to inadequate patching.

The Under-Secretary of State recently made a vist to Northern Ireland and he is well aware of the need for urgent provision of the Castledawson bypass, the Magherafelt-to-Moneymore road and the Magherafelt bypass—to name but a few. Several of those roads have been on the list for many years and promises have been made to provide money for them.

One of Northern Ireland's problems is education. The inspectorate's report shows that the present curriculum is being restricted by shortages due to expenditure cuts. Paragraph 38 of the report, published over a year ago, states:

> "The curriculum for 11-19 year olds is being restricted to some extent by the curtailment of outside activities, by shortages of equipment and the materials for practical subjects."

Of the building programme necessary to upgrade secondary schools, the report states:

> "There is a need to make provision which will enable schools to implement the balanced and broad curriculum through the addition of special spaces for science, craft, design, technology or physical education."

If there are shortages of material, equipment, teachers and buildings for the present curriculum, how do the Government envisage broadening the curriculum through the introduction of new subjects, new teaching methods and new methods of study?

I trust that the programme will not become another cynical exercise in diverting attention from the real plight of education in the Province, but that resources will be allocated to improve the quality of education.

Many hon. Members want to take part in the debate. I have prepared comments on many other subjects, but I shall mention only two further simple matters. I come from Mid-Ulster, the area with the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom—indeed, the highest unemployment in Europe. I plead with the Government to introduce more attractive incentive packages for prospective investors. In the face of such overwhelming unemployment, the bodies entrusted with providing jobs have a gigantic task which I do not under-estimate. However, I am convinced that, with the Mid-Ulster work force—one of the best in the United Kingdom — and the dynamic sales initiatives, we can be brought from the depths.

I will not under-estimate the figures given to us, as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) did. I am delighted that the increase in unemployment has dropped. In February 1983-84 the figure was 7,800 and in February 1984-85 it was 420. I trust that we shall see a dramatic turn in the figures and that the people of Ulster will be allowed to do a simple job, and work and provide for the Province as they have done in the past. I spoke to the Minister privately today and asked him to visit my constituency to see some of the problems at first hand. He readily accepted that invitation. I welcome that and trust that the visit will take place soon.

[Rev. William McCrea]

The problems facing our elderly, our unemployed, those who are urgently needing home helps — all of them among my constituents — should be a burden on both my heart and that of the Government. I earnestly appeal to the Government to listen carefully representations from the elected representatives people so that we may dispel the problems and bright and happier future to the whole of this part United Kingdom.

9.56 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): In his speech the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) spoke of not going back over history. The tragedy is that in a House and from a profession steeped in history, Government and Opposition indubitably have failed to learn the lesson of history and to listen to the voices of Ulster Members. We have already seen evidence of that tonight.

I draw to the attention of the House the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) on 11 June, which is published in the *Official Report*, Vol. 61. He pointed out our traditional antipathy to this method of dealing with Northern Ireland business. Even tonight there have been suggestions that Northern Ireland is served more beneficially than other parts of the United Kingdom. I do not doubt that we have benefited in some areas, but if the appropriation order for the rest of the kingdom were dealt with on this basis, we would all see how other areas of the United Kingdom were dealt with specifically. We discovered in the publication of a breakdown into regions that Northern Ireland normally comes about fifth in the areas of benefit rather than first. Therefore, I advise the House that my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against the order on the principle that we should be treated in the same context as the rest of the kingdom.

I take up the point of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and ask the Minister to spell out the figures. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West may have missed the good news at that point, when he said that that was the only good news that the Minister had. I believe that I am right in saying that about 7,000 people come on to the employment register each year, so even to mark time we must create that number of new jobs each year. I hope that the Minister will re-examine those figures, because the important point was made that, although none of us can be satisfied with unemployment in Northern Ireland, constructive steps have been taken from which we should derive encouragement.

When the Minister deals with energy, will he say whether the Government have decided to allow those who have been using town gas for cooking — it looks as though the onward march of events means that comparatively soon there will be no more town gas — and who wish to convert to liquid gas to have the same rights as others who will convert to other forms of fuel? I fear that the Government may be tempted not to do so. Since they are the Government of choice, they should give those older people the opportunity to have cheaper fuel and not to have to rely on electricity.

While I am on the subject of fuel, will the Government give a little more publicity to the fact that the coal advisory service, which to the uninitiated seems to be a benevolent society to guide people on how to get the best from coal, may in fact be a cover for the coal importers and is more concerned with arguing their case? We have already seen press releases defending the fact that there will be no reduction in coal prices, although the miners' strike is over, because we have been trading in dollars and there has been advance trading. It appears that the service is already preparing an argument to force the people of Northern Ireland to continue to pay a high price for coal.

Can the Minister confirm the figures given by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West for the employment of graduates in engineering from Queen's university? I may be more sceptical than others, but I do not normally take as hard facts the figures that appear in the press. There can be printers' errors and sometimes reporters get the wrong end of the stick. Only last week, I had the privilege of travelling in an aeroplane with a senior professor in this area at Queen's university, who said that graduates from the electrical and engineering faculties were being snapped up not only by overseas companies but in Northern Ireland. I understand that about 27 graduates annually from Queen's are automatically taken on the payroll of Shorts, which is moving forward with new technology.

As we are trying to improve employment in Northern Ireland, is enough being done to co-ordinate the Industrial Development Board's initiatives and finance with the research work carried out at Queen's university and other establishments in Northern Ireland so that the creative engineering skills latent in Northern Ireland can be harnessed to new industries? At present, many research projects are financed by overseas industrialists from Japan and America, and the outcome of the research is going across the oceans. We live in a global village, and we are happy to share our knowledge with others, but I believe that we should try to do more to create job opportunities of that kind in Northern Ireland.

I turn to a few points which arise directly out of the order. Class IV deals with street lighting. I do not think that we have been fully satisfied with the maintenance of street lighting, especially in Belfast, since the changeover from the Northern Ireland electricity service to the Department of the Environment. Are the supervisors looking after street lighting properly? Where there is community unrest, I believe that it is unwise for street lights not to be functioning for long periods. I question whether the money that is provided for this purpose is being spent wisely and properly. I notice that there has been a decrease in the amount of money set aside for new installations and improvements.

Will the Dunmurry bypass be completed this year? In particular, when will the stretch to bypass Areema be started and completed? Three years ago, I was assured by a former Minister in the Northern Ireland Office that this stretch of the bypass was to be started that year. To my knowledge, work upon it has not yet begun. It is important that it should be started, and completed at the earliest possible opportunity.

I welcome the fact that money is to be provided for the development of Belfast international airport. However, is the Department satisfied that the money is being spent in the best possible way? I declare an interest. It seems to me that the marketing director of the airport has a strange way of attracting business to Aldergrove. He criticises in the media those who are trying to build up the traffic between Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The firm concerned has managed to get "slots" into Gatwick and it is servicing Belfast. To do this and meet security requirements at Gatwick involves two landings. The marketing director criticised the company for the efforts that it has made to improve business.

In that context, is it wise for the Department to continue to subsidise a very fine bus which rarely carries more than two passengers? Would it not have been wiser a long time ago to provide a minibus rather than a large bus? I am sure

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

that it impresses those passengers who are brought into the centre of Belfast, but if insufficient people use it, it is foolish to use such a large bus. It is a shameful waste of money to spend £100,000 a year on this service.

Turning to Class IX, may I say a few words about the provision of new buildings, the financing of the staff council and the overall development of the health service? Can the Minister assure the House that money to cover growing administrative costs is not hidden within these figures at a time when we are being asked to cut back on the provision of health and social services?

I know that there is great concern within the nursing profession. This may have arisen because at an earlier date the nurses opted out of their traditional role of managing the ward and the hospital. We now have administrators. Perhaps the time has come to examine again the growth in administrative costs and to urge that more facilities be provided for patients instead of allowing administrative costs to continue to rise.

I ask the Minister to supply us with a list of voluntary bodies and the grants that are made available to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) has expressed some misgivings on this score. I know, too, that the Community Advice Bureau has been asking questions. In and earlier debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) expressed similar misgivings. Unfortunately, we have not yet had a proper response. I should like to know whether Action MS is included in the voluntary bodies and whether its grant has been upgraded to meet the tremendous work that it is doing. I should like to know also whether Lifecare has been admitted at last to the grant system to asssist it in the work of caring for those who need help.

In dealing with expenditure decreases, I ask the Minister to explain why there has been a decrease in the number of student radiographers. There is concern about unemployment and I understand that there is still a need for radiographers. Is the problem linked with that of providing a college or school of radiography in Belfast? Is this a recurring problem? Would it not be better for funds to be spent on training? There has been tremendous development at Shorts recently and I understand that it has had to advertise abroad for avionics engineers because of a failure to train local young people. The company has had to look to Great Britain to find trained personnel. Could it be that while we are providing money for unemployment benefit, we are not providing enough to enable local people to be trained to take up job opportunities as they arise?

Is the Minister satisfied no over-age workers are still being employed in social services when they could be drawing the retirement pension? I know of one case where more efficient work could be done in the office concerned, for the good of the community.

I ask again for the Secretary of State to tell us what relationship exists between the provision of bursaries for the training of radiographers and social workers and the staffing targets that are set by the various Northern Ireland health boards. I have been probing along that line. I am concerned that we are not providing sufficient staff to deal with the community's needs.

Is the Under-Secretary of State prepared to lend support to a call for an early debate on the recent report by the Select Committee on Social Services on care in the community? We should remember the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North about the lack of provision for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped. Those Select Committee members who visited Northern Ireland were impressed by what was happening, but they recognised the need for more community provision. The figures in the order do not encourage me to think that adequate provision has been made.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It might help the House if I say that the first of the Front Bench speakers hopes to catch my eye at 10.50 pm.

10.15 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It comes as a surprise to hear that the Front Bench replies are to begin so early. Many of us have other things to say. I should have thought that the replies would begin at 11 pm and take half an hour. That would give hon. Members an opportunity to participate. I am glad that there is agreement between the Opposition and the Government. I shall be as brief as I can. I do not wish to go over the ground that has already been covered.

I agree with much of what has been said, but disagree with some of the points of the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). I shall vote for the Appropriation. I am amused to find that the hon. Gentleman will vote against his own Assembly salary. That is his business, and on his head be it.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Declare an interest.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I shall say something at another place at another time.

I am grateful for every penny that comes to Northern Ireland. I do not accept that the money comes because we have a begging bowl. We have a right, as part of the United Kingdom, to a fair share of the cake, and we are entitled to the moneys that we receive. We in Northern Ireland are at the same level, pay the same type of income tax and carry the same responsibilities as any other citizens of the United Kingdom.

The emphasis in the debate has rightly been an unemployment, especially the dark shadow of unemployment in the Province. It will come as no surprise to hon. Members to hear that I shall confine my remarks to agriculture. We have talked about creating jobs, and that is very important. To some extent I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, South, but I believe that the figures give us some encouragement. There seems to be at least a halt to the disastrous unemployment trend. I trust that it is a real halt, but we shall have to wait and see. It would be churlish if we did not emphasise that matter.

I am anxious that we should retain the jobs that we already have. There is a great danger in not preserving what we have. There is a slogan in Ulster, "What we have, we have" and I believe that we need to hold on to the jobs that we have, especially in agriculture, which is the largest employer in Northern Ireland.

The Under-Secretary of State should know that there are certain problems in Northern Ireland, some of which we are meeting face on and some of which—if the EEC has its pernicious way with us—we shall have to face in the future.

I wish to mention three matters briefly. First, Northern Ireland dairy farmers feel—I believe rightly—that they

should have received the 65,000 tonnes of additional quota allocated under the milk regime by the EEC. We are coming to a new year, and the Commissioner has made it clear that he will be making a similar proposal. Can the Minister give us an assurance tonight that if the United Kingdom gets an extra 65,000 tonnes of quota he will see that it comes to us in Northern Ireland? That was its purpose.

I should like to point out to the Minister an interesting figure that has been released by the Milk Marketing Board. If we were put on a par with the Irish Republic, we would receive 190,000 tonnes. We have not been allocated much, but we should receive what we are entitled to. What will the Minister do about the matter? Will he allow the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to rob us of what is rightfully ours? Of the tribunal awards for development claims, 45 per cent. are likely to be met. Scotland will receive 57·5 per cent. and England and Wales 65 per cent. of their respective claims. That is another problem that faces the Northern Ireland dairy industry.

With regard to the outgoers scheme, exceptional hardship cases in Great Britain will be met in full, but in Northern Ireland the quota so far surrendered under the outgoers scheme is only 1 per cent., whereas the Government expected that it would be 5 per cent. That is yet another difficulty for the Northern Ireland dairy industry. What will the Minister do about those problems, because as they increase jobs are being lost?

Secondly, I want to deal with the beef industry. As the Minister is aware, the Commission has proposed to the Council of Ministers that the beef variable premium scheme should be done away with. That would mean that we would have one support scheme only—intervention. We do not produce beef to store—we produce it for the consumer. That proposal is looming ahead of us. It would be disastrous to do away with the variable beef premium scheme.

The United Kingdom will be expected to rely solely upon the intervention scheme. There are already 680,000 tonnes of meat in store in the Community. The full effects of the introduction of the milk quota have not yet worked through the system. A significant level of cow culling may be expected in 1985-86. The market will be further depressed by the release of meat presently in store. There is no proposal for any planned initiative to stimulate market demand or to dispose of the stocks already in store. We shall therefore have a further problem.

To compensate for the loss of the variable beef premium, it is estimated that about 40,000 tonnes of beef in Northern Ireland would have to be bought under the intervention scheme. At best, Northern Ireland has only 20,000 tonnes of storage space available. Such space will not be available for 1985-86 because of the beef already in store and because of the anticipated high level of cow culling. It will prove impossible both to take sufficient volume of beef off the market during the normal intervention period and to find sufficient storage capacity if the variable beef premium is abolished, and there will be a problem even if it is retained, because the stores are already choc-a-bloc full.

How will the Development Board and the Department of Economic Development handle the proposition, already laid before them, for the building of a large blast-freezing store in Northern Ireland to provide sufficient storage in Northern Ireland to cope with the meat? Last year, when there was a change in the beef variable scheme, intervention buying increased dramatically. That was evidenced by the fact that the United Kingdom accounted for 75 per cent. of increased Community-wide purchasing, and Northern Ireland accounted for some 80 per cent. of total intervention purchases in the United Kingdom. In addition, 12,700 tonnes of beef were accepted into private storage in Northern Ireland, out of a Community total of 275,000 tonnes. Even if we retain the scheme, we shall be in grave difficulty. If it is abolished, there will be a spin-off affecting the meat processing plants and so on, and we shall be in great difficulty in retaining employment.

I ask the Minister to put it on record tonight that the Northern Ireland Office will fight tooth and nail to retain the premium scheme. I hope that he will not come back to the House with a diluted scheme and tell us that Ministers could not get all that they wanted but that they have got a little. It is vital that we should know and that it should be spelt out here tonight, where the Northern Ireland Ministers stand on this issue. It is not enough to say that Ministers will fight for us. We want to know that they are totally committed to the scheme. To lose it would be a disaster. Even if we do not lose it, we shall face many serious problems.

I ask the Minister to give us some assurance on those points. There seems to be an effort by Europe to change the traditions of the United Kingdom. The beef industry is largely concerned with heifer beef. As the Minister will know, heifer beef does not go into intervention. It is the steers that go into intervention. He will also be aware that the premium is paid on the whole carcase, but that it is only certain quarters—and at certain times of the year only parts of those quarters—that go into intervention. I ask the Minister for a full commitment on that issue.

This is a debate in which one can wander from Dan to Beersheba. I want, thirdly to wander to Kilkeel for a moment. What is the Minister doing about the proposal for a new dredger for the Kilkeel fishermen? The Select Committee on Agriculture was informed on Tuesday that an application was made in February 1984 with regard to that dredger. The Agriculture Department approved it, and it is now with the Finance Department. The Fishery Harbour Authority says that if it is not approved by 1 April it will be curtains for the Kilkeel fishermen. What is happening to the proposal? Can the Minister announce that he will do something about it? I am glad that the authority has put the order out to tender in the hope that there will be a favourable answer from the Department. I am also glad that Harland and Wolff is interested in the tender, and that if its bid is no more than 5 per cent. higher than a non-United Kingdom producer it can win the contract. The benefits would therefore be felt by more than the Kilkeel fishermen.

As a constituency Member, I know that there is only one large island with a population off Northern Ireland — Rathlin. At the turn of the century, 1,000 people lived there, and there are now fewer than 100. They have serious difficulties. I know that the various Departments are doing something for them. Perhaps we can have a progress report on the schemes, which I do not want to go into for reasons of time, so that we might know how they are going. I have already spoken to the Minister about an educational problem. I hope to be able to speak to my constituent about it. I trust that it will be resolved satisfactorily.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

I have spoken of some of the issues on my mind and on my constituents' minds, and I trust that we shall have some profitable answers.

10.32 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): This is a wide-ranging order. As many hon. Members wish to speak, I shall leave out the padding and get to the nub of what I want to say. I might sound a little disjointed, but I will have to risk that.

Parts of my constituency have problems when designated and undesignated waterways flood and damage houses. When we make inquiries about compensation, we are told that we must prove that there has been negligence on the part of the Department. In one part of my constituency, road drains, which belong to the Department of the Environment, run into a watercourse. Great flooding has been caused by water coming off the road and drainage work done on farmland. They drained farmland and put the water into the watercourse, which promptly flooded. When my constituents tried to get compensation, they were told that it was an undesignated watercourse and there was no way that they could be given any.

In one part, Housing Executive houses were flooded from a watercourse. People were told that they would have to prove that it flooded because of negligence by the Department. One of the families concerned was on supplementary benefit, with no household insurance. The Housing Executive had no insurance which covered this, and the department refused to pay any compensation.

I would ask the Minister how one is expected to do something for one's constituents in that sort of instance. The whole question of designated and undesignated watercourses should be looked at.

Street lights have been mentioned, and they are a favourite topic of certain people in Northern Ireland. I will not go into this because it would take too long, but in one instance I was used as a shuttlecock between the Department of the Environment and the electricity service, and it took me five days to get a rapair done. I never discovered whose fault it was that the repair was not done more quickly—I was only too pleased to get it done eventually.

Mr. Beggs: I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that when a Member takes up any problem for a constituent with any Government Department it should be resolved by the Department concerned, not handed back to the Member so that he has to shuttle round the Departments to find which is responsible. It is about time that Departments knew where responsibility lies in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Forsythe: I agree, of course, but, since I have been in business in the past and have been used to lifting telephones to resolve problems, perhaps part of that difficulty was caused by me.

Everyone is getting very excited, quite rightly, about the lignite that we have in Northern Ireland. Part of that lignite is in my constituency an there are people living in the Crumlin area who are uneasy about some of the developments in connection with this and the envisaged new power station. I have not had the greatest response from the private firm which is looking after the operation, and I am very disappointed about this.

Dr. Boyson: The operation of the mining is under a contract laid down by the Department and the firm has to comply with that. If there are problems concerning the mining, these should be taken up, so that the conditions laid down for mining there or elsewhere in the Province do not put people at risk. The firm will be taking out the lignite within the terms which have been stipulated by the Department, which, as far as I am concerned, has heard nothing whatsoever about this.

Mr. Forsythe: I told the Minister on one occasion that I wanted to speak to him about the lignite operation, and he said that I could certainly do so. I was endeavouring to look after the interests of my constituents and deal with the matter between them and the firm. I will not go into the matter now, but will explain to the Minister what I mean.

When all this comes to fruition and we are looking to use the lignite in our area, I will do my best to see that my constituents are not disadvantaged in any way, although we welcome this operation.

Will the Minister explain why there is a decrease in current expenditure on public transport and other services? I notice that money is allowed for airport services. While on occasions the bus may not be used to go to the airport, Aldergrove airport is one of the most up-to-date and finest airports in the whole of the United Kingdom, with tremendous facilities. It would be unfortunate if, in criticising the bus service, the impression was given that the airport itself was being criticised. I am sure that that was not the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth).

One could speak for hours about Class V, which I promise not to do. Heating is put into old people's dwellings, but I remind the Minister that old people also live in ordinary dwellings. We have the unfortunate situation where old people living in old people's dwellings have heating put in, but next door to them, someone who is just as old does not get heating put in because the house is not an old people's dwelling. The Minister should consider that.

District heating has also been mentioned. The difficulty with that system is that people who have radiators are not using them but are being charged pounds every week. They get into arrears, not because they are doing anything to get into arrears, but because of the fixed price charged by the Housing Executive. If they try to move out of their home, and get a transfer, because of the arrears that they have built up by not using the heating, they cannot move. That is a tragedy for people, and one should look at it.

In one case I know, the heating system broke down. The old people were told that the system would have to be replaced. However, that was not done. They were told that they would have to wait until a scheme was devised to cover all the houses that were the same as theirs, then the heating system would be put in their home and all the others—regardless of the fact they they had no heating and that they were bringing in Super-Sers and electric heaters that were costing them a fortune to run because they were not designed for the job.

One has criticised the Housing Executive. At times it does a good job. It builds homes, although perhaps not the right ones on occasions. We should not give the impression that we are continually criticising it for the fun of the thing. But these are human beings, who are living in what is supposed to be a home. They should be treated properly by the body that has been put there by statute to

look after them, consisting of people who are sitting in a comfortably heated office all day and who on occasions will not answer the phone. Constituents' Members of Parliament have to phone up to get an answer. This is a democratic and understanding House. Even civil servants have a little sympathy, although at times it appears as if they do not.

It is not a laughing matter, or a funny matter for someone who is in a disadvantaged position in life, and who finds it difficult to live, never mind heat his home, or get food to live on. For whatever reason, if such people are put at a disadvantage by a statutory body that is supposed to be there to assist them, that is a disgrace not only to the body concerned but to those who are answerable in the House. The Minister is here to answer. When we ask questions we are told by the Minister that it is a matter for the Housing Executive. When public representatives ask the Minister to do something for those who are disadvantaged he should take notice of them. If we had much more time we could raise many more problems for Ministers to deal with.

10.46 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) referred to the heating of old people's houses. I do not know whether he was aware of it, but there was a mass lobby from the National Pensioners Convention at the House today. One of the requests placed before Members of Parliament was for a higher heating allowance so that they might have some relief from the cold winter. Many senior citizens in my constituency spend between one quarter and one third of their weekly income on trying to keep themselves warm. They pray to survive the winter so that in the summer they may save money for clothes. The Minister should show compassion for the senior citizens who have done so much to pave the way for the youth of today. I trust they will not be forgotten in their later years.

Another way in which the Government could help senior citizens is to allow them to travel free on buses. We heard earlier from the hon. Member for Antrim, South about empty buses driving up and down from the airport. The same thing happens in the city centre, yet I know senior citizens who have to walk to their destination with the aid of a walking stick because they cannot pay the concessionary rate on the buses. I do not often refer to what happens in London as an example, but the Minister responsible for the Department of the Environment would do well to emulate its system of free transport for the elderly.

The pensioners today raised other matters, including a realistic pension allowance. As that concerns the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I shall not go into it now. The Government should deal sympathetically with the petition which was lodged with Members of Parliament by the senior citizens who came to the House today.

I have had consultations on education with the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), to whose constituency I am about to refer. He gave me some papers so that I might speak on his behalf, because he is ill and unable to be here. The matter refers to the second largest housing estate in Northern Ireland, the Ballybeen housing estate at Dundonald. The hon. Member for North Down and I have a common interest in the area, as it forms part of my Assembly constituency. Indeed, I formerly represented it when I came to the House in 1979. The estate has two schools within it. One of them is Ballyoran primary school. Many of us were amazed when the South Eastern Education Library Board proposed to close that school. We could see no logical reason for closing it. We recognised that more children attended that school than attended many other schools which the board was happy to keep open.

We also recognised that that school's educational standards were much higher than those of other schools in the board's area. We knew that there would only be a minimal saving, in that the board had already suggested that the school should be used for some other purpose, such as for nursery education or for youth provision. It now appears that the saving amounts to £25,000. For £25,000, the board has decided to close that school.

I must charge the South Eastern Educational Library Board with being guilty of an act of blatant discrimination and of bias of a most sectarian nature against the predominantly Protestant area of Ballybeen. I have documents in my possession, and in my hand, which clearly show that the school is being closed for one purpose and one purpose alone—to obtain £25,000, so that the board can fund another primary school, which happens to be St. Kieran's primary school in Poleglass. That relatively new housing estate on the fringes of West Belfast — which is small compared with that of Ballybeen—is to be given the money to have a primary school. Those who are to be punished are the Protestants of the East Belfast and North Down area.

As if that was not bad enough, it was appalling to discover that, although the board has for years recognised that there is a need for nursery and youth provision in the area, it has given additional money, not to Ballybeen for that provision, but to St. Kieran's for nursery provision in the Poleglass area. Thus, a primary school will be taken away from Ballybeen, and instead of giving the nursery provision to Ballybeen in its place, it is being given to St. Kieran's.

I know that the Minister does not have direct responsibility for the board's day-to-day affairs, but he has overall responsibility for its actions. Under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act, which forbids such religious and political discrimination against my constituents and those of the hon. Member for North Down, I hope that the Minister will look into the board's activities and ensure that it makes provision for the need which it has already recognised, instead of making provision for the Roman Catholics, Republicans and IRA supporters of the Poleglass area.

10.53 pm

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): I was prepared to condense a half-hour speech into one of 15 minutes, but now I find that I shall have to condense it even more. I shall do my best. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), I may have to make a somewhat disjointed speech, but I hope that hon. Members will bear with me.

I turn first to the employment, or lack of employment, in my constituency. Once again I must castigate the Industrial Development Board, and to a lesser extent the Local Enterprise Development Unit, for the total failure to bring any employment to my constituency or to provide any jobs. They have shown a lack of interest in the area, and have been unable to provide anything. The IDB has

[Mr. James Nicholson]

been a dead loss, and although LEDU has been somewhat of an improvement on that, that does not say an awful lot for it.

I am concerned about employment in the area. I am only too well aware, however, that the events of last Thursday night in Newry cannot enhance the area's reputation and might deter employers from setting up in it. The Government and others will have to cope with that in due course.

I shall have to dispense with much of what I had intended to say about the roads in my constituency. I regret that the Under-Secretary of State is not here tonight, because I was looking forward to crossing swords with him regarding the Damolly customs post. Or perhaps he was aware of that, and that is why he is not here.

The hon. Gentleman was led up the garden path. He came to Newry one afternoon in a blaze of glory and went on television to tell the whole of Northern Ireland that he had solved the problem of the customs station in Newry. He was led up the garden path by the SDLP-controlled council on his visit to Newry. The people of Damolly were left high and dry and the vast majority of the elected representatives in the area do not agree with the Under-Secretary's decision.

He capitulated, first to the SDLP and secondly to the Provisional Sinn Fein, the latter of which challenged him not to put the customs post where it should have been put, which was on the border. I feel strongly about this issue, especially for the people of the Damolly area. It is a mixed community and every member of it is up in arms about the decision over the customs station and the fact that the new link road is to go through the area. I look forward to crossing swords with the Minister on the issue on another occasion.

Time does not permit me to raise various matters concerning the Housing Executive. I will confine myself to appealing for more old people's dwellings in the Armagh area. They need accommodation much nearer to the city centre than where the Housing Executive is currently building houses, which is almost one and a half miles outside the town; and the elderly do not have a bus service to get into the centre.

Housing Executive grant officers are seeing people throughout the Province, but they are interpreting the rules differently in almost every area. One will tell people that they do not qualify for renovation grant while a second officer will tell people living nearby with similar problems that they do qualify for grant. Alternatively, an officer will tell somebody that grant is payable, and another officer will appear on the scene later to say that grant is not applicable. Indeed, people have to put up a hard fight to obtain grant. If we are to have grant officers, they should interpret the rules correctly and Members of Parliament should not have to be called in almost daily to resolve difficulties.

Hon. Members will be aware that I frequently speak about agriculture. I will restrict my remarks, because of the time, to saying that I agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) about the milk quota. With regard to the beef variable premium, not enough is being done for that sector and the Government have not lived up to what was expected of them in trying to obtain cheaper grain for that sector of agriculture in Northern Ireland.

I urge the Government not to ignore the importanc animal health in Northern Ireland. Strict control is nee

There are 70 miles between Newry and the entry at Belcoo. Cattle are in danger because of that distan I know of one man who sat for 10 hours in a queu Belcoo at the beginning of this week with cattle on wagon. He had travelled for hours before that. If tha not to the detriment of the animals I do not know wha Something is wrong. It is disgraceful.

11.1 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am pleased to able to reply on behalf of the Opposition. I shall not be to comment on all the speeches. The Minister will be to do that better than I can. I shall not be able to emu the blaze of glory in which the Minister visited constituency represented by the hon. Member for Ne and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson).

The Minister talked about the economy of North Ireland and about unemployment and employment. rightly took credit for the fact that public expenditure Northern Ireland would be £30 million higher than level planned. It is not that he has got blood out of a sto he did better than that. He extracted money out of Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The Minister declared this was further evidence of the Governme determination to tackle the economic and social proble in Northern Ireland at a time when public expendit elsewhere in the United Kingdom is being held.

The Minister rightly said that, whereas betw February 1983 and February 1984 the increase unemployment was 7,800, between February 1984 February 1985 the increase in unemployment was 4 However, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Mem for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said, that means that extra 420 able-bodied people are looking for work.

The Minister spoke with compassion about unemployed. I accept that compassion. I accept his v that no one wishes to see the scourge of unemployme Northern Ireland or on the mainland. The Minister i compassionate man. He also made my right hon. learned Friend the Member for Warley, West an of which he almost could not refuse. He offered harmony bipartisanship, but my right hon. and learned Friend not in as harmonious a mood as that.

Industrial production in Northern Ireland has increa by 3 per cent., and manufacturing output is up by 4 cent. A further sign of recovery is the increase employment of 4,170 in the third and fourth quarters 1984. We welcome the increase in industrial producti and manufacturing output, and the increase in the num of those who are employed, but that does not mean t the storm cloud of uncertainty is any more dissipated Northern Ireland than it is on the mainland.

Independent commentators and job creation agencies Northern Ireland appear to be agreed on another aspect the Northern Ireland economy—that unemployment remain high for years to come. Indeed, when I read forecasts earlier, I was reminded of the 1933 Budget Neville Chamberlain. He predicted for both North Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom t unemployment would remain high for years to come hear echoes of that speech in most of the statements ma by Government spokesmen on Treasury and econo matters. Neville Chamberlain said that there was a li to what Government could do. I do not suggest that th

views were put forward by the Minister tonight, but they are the views of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and they attach to the economies of Northern Ireland and of the rest of the United Kingdom.

The two most recent surveys carried out in Northern Ireland show that jobs will be lost more rapidly than they will be replaced, and that unemployment is likely to reach a total of 140,000 by 1989. At Question Time today, I wondered out loud whether those who find work in Northern Ireland are part-time or full-time workers. The Minister replied that while they may be part-time jobs, they are better than no jobs, and that part-time jobs may be converted into full-time jobs. However, it is recognised that because employers do not pay national insurance on part-time workers, but do pay on full-time workers, there is a cost-cutting incentive to employ part-time rather than full-time workers. The surveys show that there are in excess of 100,000 people working part-time in Northern Ireland. In 1978, part-time work accounted for 17 per cent. of the total work force, but it now accounts for nearly 22 per cent.

We cannot distinguish this order from the consequences of the medium-term financial strategy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is not present tonight, and he has that in common with our colleagues in the Social Democratic/Liberal alliance. I make no criticism of that. They are rarely present for these debates. The Labour party is present, with solid ranks on the Front Bench.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Only two.

Mr. Bell: Those two may be the great talent of the Labour party in years to come. Two are better than none, and no hon. Member from either the Liberal party or the SDP is present.

The medium-term financial strategy affects Northern Ireland as it does the mainland. That strategy is a sort of ghost that runs through this order. The Chancellor is seeking to squeeze inflation from the economy and at the same time to create growth and jobs. The Opposition believe that those objectives are mutually exclusive and will no more work for the Northern Irish economy than they will for that on the mainland.

Housing has been mentioned tonight. The Minister referred to a visit by hon. Members from both sides of the House, who were encouraged by what they had seen being done about housing. I am no expert on housing in Northern Ireland, but on my visit I spoke to members of the Housing Department, visited houses and was impressed at the progress made, considering the problems.

Housing remains the Government's top priority on social and environmental programmes, and we welcome that. We recognise that the immediate environment of a person is part and parcel of his way of life. That is as true in Northern Ireland as it is on the mainland, but there has been a shift in emphasis away from new public sector house building towards the improvement and maintenance of existing stock. The preliminary results of the 1984 house condition survey show that the level of unfitness has fallen from 14·1 per cent. in 1979 to 10·4 per cent. last year. In 1981 the unfitness level in Great Britain was 6·2 per cent. In Northern Ireland, more than 51,000 houses were still unfit. The number of homes lacking at least one basic amenity has also descreased, from 19·9 per cent. to 9·2 per cent.

The worrying feature of the survey is disrepair in the private sector, which increased from 8·6 per cent. in 1979 to 15·4 per cent. in 1984. As I understand it, the Government propose to reduce new Housing Executive construction from 3,000 new starts last year to 2,250 for 1985-86. The Housing Executive will concentrate instead on the improvement and maintenance programme. The expenditure on housing services is planned to increase from £149 million in 1984-85 to £169 million in 1985-86.

The Northern Ireland Economic Council questioned this change in strategy and made the following comment in its annual report for 1983-84:

> "The available statistics do not show clearly whether this switch is justified. On the one hand, the census results suggest a housing surplus; on the other hand, the Housing Executive still has a waiting list of 20,000."

The council suggests that a mismatch may exist in terms of location or type of accommodation between the supply of and demand for, public housing. The latest Government figures show that the Housing Executive's waiting list is getting longer. There were 23,482 people on the list in March 1984, and 24,543 in September 1984.

In the 13th annual report of the Housing Executive, the chairman stated:

> "Whether this shift in policy"—

away from new build—

> "will prove to be correct must depend to a large extent on the willingness and ability of the private sector to fill the gap by providing a sustained programme of new low-cost housing of acceptable quality."

Experience gives little cause for optimism on that front. In 1982, 4,487 new starts were recorded in the private sector, but only 2,672 new dwellings were completed. In 1983 there were 6,892 new starts, and only 3,571 completions. We can see the comparison. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the Houseing Executive's target of an annual reduction of at least 1 per cent. in the unfitness level has not been met. Therefore, while we scrutinise the figures in Class V, as we scrutinise all of the elements in the order, we shall continue to examine these matters carefully in the months to come.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The hon. Gentleman might wish to know that the Department of the Environment has accepted that the comparative statistics for the commencement and completion of houses are seriously inaccurate, and that the picture given by figures such as the hon. Gentleman has just read to the House is inherently misleading. It hopes to be able to produce correct figures for completions, which will put the picture in a different light.

Mr. Bell: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's intervention. If that is the case, we shall look forward to a different perspective on the figures that we have before us now.

May I refer briefly to the intervention of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). He is worried about the implications for Northern Ireland of the price proposals of the Commission for 1985-86 as they relate to beef. In addition to the persistently high level of unemployment in Northern Ireland, which is about 22 per cent., there is the employment potential of the agriculture industry, which employs 10 per cent. of the work force directly, and which provides employment for a further 3 per cent. in ancillary industries. Therefore, what the European Community proposes to do about beef is important to Northern Ireland and we shall give to the hon. Member and to all those who are worried about this issue all the support that we can.

[Mr. Bell]

We shall not vote against the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, but we shall continue to ride hard on the Government on this issue as it relates to Northern Ireland as we will on the economy as a whole.

11.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Clearly it is impossible, in the time now available, to cover all the points that have been raised during the debate. However, I hope that the House will agree that it was right that we should allow as many contributions to be made from the Back Benches as possible. I shall ensure that either I or my colleagues reply in due course to the detailed points which have been made that I am unable to cover. I say in particular to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that I shall ensure he receives a co-ordinated reply on the approach of the Government to the undoubted problems facing the community on Rathlin as well as on the narrower educational point that he raised.

May I begin by saying a word about the point made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), which I understand forms the basis of the decision of the Ulster Unionist party to vote against the order. The arrangements which he criticised for the financial management of Northern Ireland are not new. He must know that Northern Ireland has had separate legislation and a separate Consolidated Fund for the last 60 years. There is no secret or hidden reason why the Government decided to continue with these arrangements. I know that there are those who assert that there is, but I can assure the hon. Member that that is not so.

We continue to believe that a devolved Government would best meet the future needs of the Northern Ireland community. As the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is engaged in talks with the parties to find out whether it is possible to work out mutually acceptable arrangements. I know that some hon. Members have reservations about that policy, but that is what this Government, with the support of this House, are seeking to do. Viewed in that light, I believe that the financial and legislative arrangements for Northern Ireland are appropriate and sensible.

A number of hon. Members raised detailed questions about the roads programme. I shall make sure that they receive replies. In particular, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) asked about the maintenance programme. Within the £48·4 million which was provided for this programme, priority is given to the structural maintenance of the existing network. The budget allocations for this work to each division are closely correlated with the annual data on the condition of the entire roads network in Northern Ireland. A system known as the maintenance assessment rating and costing of highways, or MARCH, which is used on this side of the water in order to make an objective judgment of the needs of the roads system, is used in Northern Ireland. I believe that in general it gives us very good value for money. There is an appropriate allocation of the limited but still substantial resources that are available for highway maintenance.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North made three separate points under the broad heading of agriculture and fisheries. I can assure the hon. Member and the House that Northern Ireland has received the full benefit of the 65,00 tonnes of milk from the Community reserve, plus a additional amount from the United Kingdom total. Th percentage amount by which the Northern Ireland quot was less than the 1983 deliveries would be no more tha in other regions of the United Kingdom, even thoug deliveries of milk in Northern Ireland increase proportionately more between 1981 and 1983 tha deliveries in England and Wales. Northern Irelan received a quota about 12·6 per cent. above wholesal deliveries in 1981 and 2·5 per cent. above that for 1982 which was a record year. In England and Wales the quot represents an increase of only 1·5 per cent. on 198 deliveries and a reduction of over 3 per cent. on 198 deliveries. I do not think that Northern Ireland can clai that it has not received the full benefit of the 65,00 tonnes. If this is continued for 1985—I believe that will be—Northern Ireland can look forward next year t similar treatment.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred to th beef variable premium scheme. I can assure him that m right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisherie and Food will be pressing strongly for the scheme' continuation. We are conscious of its importance to th agriculture industry in the Province. He spoke also of th Kilkeel dredger. I am told that the project is bein appraised in terms of the normal procedures for a projec of that nature. We have noted the hon. Gentleman' remarks about the need for urgency and speed i considering the matter. I can assure him that the appraisa will be completed in the very near future.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, Wes (Mr. Archer) made great play about the treatment of thos who owe money to public authorities in Northern Ireland He seemed to imply that we were being unduly harsh an unsympathetic. I urge him and the House to recognise tha public debt in Northern Ireland at the end of 1983-84 wa about £45 million. That is an absurdly high figure for province the size of Northern Ireland. It is one that ha been the subject of criticism by the Public Account Committee. It was essential that we took urgent action t get debt to public authorities under control. The right hon and learned Gentleman omitted to mention that many o those who are in debt to the authorities avail themselve of the opportunity to enter into voluntary repaymen agreements. It is only those who decline to enter into suc agreements who are subject to the scheme to which th right hon. and learned Gentleman referred.

Mr. Archer: Is the Minister saying that no one i subjected to the Payment of Debt Act if he subjects himsel voluntarily to a repayment agreement?

Mr. Scott: If they comply with the conditions of th scheme, there is no reason why they should be subjecte to the last-resort mechanism. I can assure the House tha the mechanism is operated as humanely as possible. I includes a review procedure to ensure that excessiv hardship can be avoided. Given the scale of the problen that is faced by the Government in Northern Ireland, w have tried to tackle it in a humane and compassionat manner. However, we are responsible for public mone and the PAC has criticised the Government for allowin the level of debt to reach such a level.

The House will be aware of the cancellation of th Kinsale gas project. The subsidy was running at £1

million a year and there was not even a distant prospect of the project becoming viable. There was a possibility of the subsidy, and even an increased one, continuing indefinitely. The gas industry's joint working party has proposed a revised option that is confined to greater Belfast and its satellites. It involves much lower capital costs than the cancelled project. We have not received the scheme officially. When it is received, we shall have to consider how it can be evaluated. We are told that there is a possibility of European Community support for any such scheme. We shall have to appraise it carefully, as will the Commission, to ascertain whether it is viable. I cannot see that we could possibly enter into any commitment for a continuing subsidy for the gas industry in Northern Ireland.

A number of hon. Members' comments on health and social services in Northern Ireland might have led some listeners to believe that in some way we were cutting back on health and social care in the Province. That is the reverse of the truth. Over the four years from 1979-80 to 1983-84, expenditure on those services has grown from £353 million to £600 million—some 70 per cent. in cash terms and 8 per cent. in real terms. This is the clearest possible evidence that, despite our economic problems and the inevitable constraints on public expenditure, we are committed to the maintenance and development of health and personal social services to meet the needs of the whole population.

I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South—it is important that we spend that money as wisely as we can. That is why my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has asked the health and social service boards to make what I regard as modest efficiency savings of 0·5 per cent. per annum—not so that that money can be cut, but so that it can be put into vital new developments in health and social services and to meet the new needs that are emerging. By making the system more efficient and by not allowing administration to burgeon, we can provide a better service to those who need it.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) made serious allegations about the motives of the South Eastern education library board in closing the Ballyoran primary school. The matter had to come to me to approve the closure. The closure was not carried out on anything like the grounds that the hon. Gentleman described. In fact, there were two schools on that estate. The closure occurred not to ensure financial savings but primarily to ensure that the children at the school got the proper spread of curriculum necessary for their education. If the hon. Gentleman feels that he can substantiate those serious allegations, he should without hesitation or delay let me see the evidence that he claims is in his possession.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster drew attention to the critical findings of the inspectorate report on the effect of expenditure policies. He did not draw attention to the fact that the report concluded that, by an large, educational standards in schools are being maintained. I am as aware as anyone of the pressures on the education system in Northern Ireland, but I still think that education is a feature of life in the Province of which teachers, administrators and others involved can be extremely proud.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) talked about the dangers of integrating nursery provision with primary schools. Nursery provision is extremely close to my heart. I hope that in due course it will be possible to have an expanded programme of nursery education in Northern Ireland, but in the meantime I believe that joint provision of the sort that the hon. Gentleman was criticising can play an important part in nursery education for many of the young people who need it.

Many hon. Members rightly expressed their concern at the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland. As the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) recognised, the Government fully share their concern. I assure hon. Members that the overall strategy is designed to create the circumstances in which the private sector will develop and thus create new job opportunities for people in Northern Ireland.

We do not have endless resources in Northern Ireland. Public expenditure already amounts to 70 per cent. of the gross national product of the Province. With limited resources, it is important that we optimise the use of those that are allocated to us. One of the most useful contributions that Northern Ireland Members can make to these debates is to address the priorities and the way in which we are using these resources. It is easy and tempting for hon. Members to identify gaps in provision. Doubtless there are gaps representing needs which should be met, but they are to be met within limited budgets. Hon. Members have to identify also what can be done less lavishly or with less money.

Northern Ireland will never be able to flourish simply on the basis of a massive public expenditure injection of funds.

We must provide a safety net for the people of Northern Ireland. I believe that we do that effectively, efficiently and with compassion, but we must also provide a springboard. I hope that public money can provide that springboard, but eventually it is the people of Northern Ireland and private enterprise that will have to turn the springboard into a reality in terms of increased living standards for the people of the Province.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 102, Noes 9.

Division No. 153] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Bellingham, Henry
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forth, Eric
Galley, Roy
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter

Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Macfarlane, Neil
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
McCusker, Harold
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nicholson, J.
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. Ken Maginnis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 20th February, be approved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (8) of Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) and the Order [7th November] relating to Business of the House, the ballot for private Members' notices of motions which are to have precedence on Friday 22nd March shall be held on Tuesday 12th March, and that notice of a subject to be raised on any motion following that ballot may be given not later than Friday 15th March.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Miners (Police Records)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this Ho do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Major.]*

11.40 pm

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): The aim of debate is to obtain justice for those coalminers who, du this long dispute, have been arrested, photograph fingerprinted and either discharged or taken to court acquitted. They are all innocent men who now want to fully satisfied that their names are clean and that t characters are without blemish: in short, that they have criminal record. All of them, to date 1,416 men, have right to witness the destruction of their photograph fingerprint records.

According to the Attorney-General's figures, wh were given to the House on 25 February, another 2,4 cases remain to be heard. There could therefore hundreds more such as I have described. Why has all come about? I believe that it is because of indiscrimin mass arrests. No fewer than 9,750 people have b arrested. The police, perhaps fearing riotous assembly having spent a few years in Northern Ireland I well kn the meaning of it—have dispatched snatch squads take out the front men. They are not necessarily agitato but men who happen to be in the front line of the m picket. Indiscriminately, scores per day have been pick up and processed like sausages. That is one method defusing the situation. There has then been conveyor-b justice at almost every stage of their journey through courts.

Home Office statistics supplied by the police prov substance to the claim that blanket arrests have been ma among legal pickets and without proper evidence. Of 7,223 arrests recorded until 9 October 1984, 1,354 min were released from police stations without being charg National and provincial newspapers have been full stories of miners being taken to court in their hundre and being cleared. The Sheffield *Morning Telegraph* 10 October 1984 ran the headline:

"Miners cleared of unlawful assembly"

and continued:

"Seven miners accused of offences during a blockade of M1 in north Derbyshire were acquitted by a jury yesterday af a fortnight-long trial. The jury at Derby Crown Court took m than four hours to clear the South Yorkshire miners who fac 13 charges, including the centuries-old offence of unlaw assembly."

The Guardian of 9 February 1985 reported:

"Striking miners cleared of picket charges. Eight striki miners were acquitted by a jury yesterday of unlawful assem during the pit dispute . . . The defence claimed that the m were arrested as a result of a police order to take prisoners rat than because of unlawful behaviour on their part."

The Guardian of 27 February 1985 reported:

"Arrests questioned as pickets go free. The police yesterd dropped charges of unlawful assembly against 23 So Yorkshire miners among 87 arrested during a mass picket Harworth colliery in north Nottinghamshire last August . . . M Craig"—

the men's solicitor—

"said that since August the men 'have been prevented fr picketing except at their own place of work. Now the cases being dropped wholesale. It makes the defence, the defenda and the union wonder why they were arrested in the first pla It suggests that the powers that be decided to use wholesale b conditions and wholesale arrests as a device to keep people picket lines.'"

The *Yorkshire Post* of 27 February 1985, under the heading "Picket cases dropped", said:

"Police were yesterday accused of using mass arrests, and rigid bail conditions to prevent picketing after charges of unlawful assembly against 21 South Yorkshire miners were formally dismissed."

Their solicitor, Mr. Alan Craig, said:

"This case is likely to make legal history in Nottinghamshire. I know of no other case where men facing such serious charges have had them all dropped. It is completely extraordinary."

Provincial paper after provincial paper said the same. The *Sheffield Telegraph*, in the heart of the Yorkshire coal field, under the heading "Unlawful assembly charges are dropped", referring again to those 21 south Yorkshire miners, said:

"Mr. Craig criticised the circumstances in which the men were arrested. 'They were battle-charged, chased and eventually rounded up in a field, arrested willy-nilly and brought to Mansfield court in the dead of the night to face extremely harsh charges."

So there we are—mass arrests, it cannot be disputed, and all innocent men. Those police methods were suspect, are suspect, and must be challenged in future, especially by an inquiry. Therefore, one can understand the National Union of Mineworkers' call for an amnesty.

Of the 9,750 people arrested, 1,416 were acquitted of all charges, and there may well be many more. The nature of the charge was that 4,089 of them were likely to cause a breach of the peace — they were stopped on the Queen's highway. We all remember the nonsense of the Dartford Tunnel, when 1,682 men were arrested for obstructing a police constable—old-fashioned picket-line pushing, a shove at a bobby, resulting again in mass arrests. These were not criminal acts, but just the normal activities of picketing now well known and established in Great Britain. Yet many hundreds of these men have been sacked by the NCB, their future ruined, thrown on the dole — and in many mining communities that means for good.

These police methods of mass arrests were the cause, and that is why there is legitimacy in the demand for an amnesty. There is no doubt that the methods of strike policing will have to be reviewed. Although the Government may well feel happy at the outcome, there is no doubt about the bitterness in our mining villages and towns over the methods used against the miners. It will take time for the wounds of the conflict between our mining communities and the police to heal. An inquiry only into what lessons the police can learn from the strike is of no use to the NUM, or indeed to society at large. There is need — indeed, an urgent need — for an independent public inquiry into the whole of police activity during the past 12 months of the coalmining dispute.

This is also true of clearing the records of the 1,416 innocent men. Solicitors on behalf of the men have written to me, and I shall quote from one of the letters:

"The taking of fingerprints by the police is not of course, peculiar to the miners arrested in the NUM/NCB dispute but the strike has highlighted the present unsatisfactory situation.

Upon arrest all miners were automatically finger-printed by the police. The men were not allowed to see a solicitor at this stage and were not, until later on in the strike, aware that they could object to having their fingerprints taken. Most miners were charged with minor offences of police and highway obstruction and threatening words and behaviour (e.g. shouting 'scab')— the sort of offence where fingerprints are not needed. . .

It is worth noting that there is no such thing as a photgraph order—despite this when taking fingerprints the police also take a photograph of the defendant. . .

A number of Chief Constables have stated publicly that they would like to have the whole populace finger-printed. By fingerprinting everyone who is charged (even though that person may later be acquitted) this helps the police a little nearer this goal.

The widespread taking of fingerprints by the police is an infringement of civil liberties. Parliament has not yet legislated that the whole country must be fingerprinted and it is, therefore, wrong for the police to endeavour to achieve their ends by this back door method."

That is just not good enough. Miners were photographed, some of them twice, and fingerprinted without permission. It is all wrong. Nor have they been given the opportunity to see their photographs and fingerprint records destroyed. That is wrong, too. They are on file in a police station. They might also be on the police national computer, staying there for ever if there is not destruction of their records. None of those men and their families will have a chance of getting a credit card, of being able to borrow money or of buying goods on hire purchase. They will be listed as a credit risk, men with a criminal record.

What of the senior police officers asking the Home Office to allow the use of the police national computer to store a special register of criminal incidents in mining areas? The Association of Chief Police Officers is interested in new categories of offences and may want to use the computer register to identify new categories of agitators — the political agitator and the industrial agitator. Hence the first national list compiled with help from the chief constables in the coal mining areas of political and industrial agitators. If the records remain of some of those 1,416 innocent men, and are so recorded on the national computer, they will be blackballed for life.

The Home Secretary is, I believe, in sympathy with my objective. Indeed, in a letter to me on 4 February 1985, he said in answer to representations from Owen Briscoe, the general secretary of the Yorkshire area of the NUM:

"At present there is no legal requirement that fingerprints and photographs should be destroyed if a person is acquitted or the case not proceeded with, nor is there any requirement that a person should be given the opportunity to witness destruction."

But the right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to say:

"It is, however, general police practice at present to destroy fingerprints and photographs if a person is acquitted or his case is not proceeded with and also to allow him to witness destruction."

In the light of those words, I now ask the Minister and the Home Secretary to make sure that the men can see justice done and that all chief constables are asked to send all the acquitted men's records to the police station nearest their homes, inform them, and allow them to go and see their records destroyed. That will be the first step to restore a good, healthy working relationship in mining communities, between police and public, between bobby and miner, and will create an atmosphere in which progress can be made on an amnesty between the area boards and the local unions. By that means the police can play a positive part in bringing peace in our coalfields. The Minister and the Home Secretary can give a lead. I hope that they will take this opportunity of doing so.

11.54 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), who is both courteous and well-informed on these matters, has raised a serious issue to which I hope that I shall be able to give a reasonably serious response. He has brought the debate before the House at a time when a

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

major dispute—the longest-running dispute of all time in United Kingdom industry—has now come to an end. It is appropriate that this evening we look at steps that should now be taken to return both policing and the industry to the normal terms of reference to which the right hon. Gentleman, and I am sure the entire House, would fully subscribe.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the dispute had seen some of the largest police operations ever, but operations against some of the most intimidatory and vicious tactics ever. Every police force in England and Wales has either provided or received aid and on occasion as many as 8,000 officers have been deployed on mutual aid.

I must use this occasion to pay tribute to those who have ensured that intimidatory practice — not normal picketing, as I am sure the right Gentleman would agree —did not succeed in preventing from doing so those miners who wished to exercise their right to go to work. Given the scale of the violence and the intimidation and the number of pickets involved in the dispute, the police have had to use their powers to arrest offenders and, where possible, to prosecute them.

The extent to which the police have had to have recourse to the use of powers is an indication of the very scale of the violence they have met. As the right hon. Gentleman said, nearly 10,000 people have been arrested in connection with the dispute; nearly 8,000 have been charged; over 5,500 have been dealt with by the courts. Of the cases dealt with to date there have been some 1,400 acquittals as the right hon. Gentleman pointed out. Of course, there are cases, including some of the most serious charges, still to be heard by the courts. As these figures show, the fact of arrest by no means indicates certainty of prosecution. Let me briefly describe the courses which can be taken after someone is arrested.

To arrest a person for an offence, the police must have reasonable suspicion of the commission of an offence for which a power of arrest exists. When a person has been arrested, the police have three broad choices: they can take no further action against him; they can caution him formally; or they can charge and prosecute him. To issue a formal caution the police would need to be satisfied of three factors: that there was sufficient evidence to justify prosecution; that the person admitted the offence; and that he consented to the issue of the caution. To charge someone, the police would have to be satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to justify the prosecution. It is important to make the point that a higher standard of evidence is required for prosecution than for arrest.

The Attorney-General's guidelines on criteria for prosecution lay down the test that the evidence should be such that there is a greater prospect of conviction than acquittal; it must also be in the public interest that the person should be prosecuted. But even when a person has been charged it is still possible that the charges will be dropped at a later stage.

Perhaps I should also mention at this point the future role which the Crown prosecution service will have. Legislation to create this service will shortly be coming before this House, having completed its passage in another place. The new service will have the duty to review cases where prosecutions have been initiated by the po will have the power to alter or drop charges and it w responsibility for the conduct of the case in court.

Now let me turn to some of the specific points right hon. Gentleman raised. Perhaps I could rel sequence of events to the records which are made police. When a person is arrested, he will usu photographed and fingerprinted. Often two photo may be taken, particularly when a large number of are made at the same time. In such cases, one w Polaroid photograph taken of the arrested person arresting officer. The purpose of this photograp avoid any doubt about which officer arrested person. The other photograph would be a conve photograph taken for local criminal records. The present no legal provision governing the photograp suspects, but there is no bar to the police photographs so long as they do not use force.

The police will also usually take fingerprint purpose of this is to link the person with any p criminal record and to provide for the future a defin between that person and his conviction, should tha result of the case. There is at present no general po the police to take fingerprints, but if a person who h charged refuses to allow his prints to be taken, the may apply to a magistrates court for an order fingerprints.

There are at present no legal obligations on the as to what they must do with fingerprints and photo if a person is cleared or if his case is not proceede But it is, as the right hon. Gentleman acknowl standard police practice that fingerprints and photo should be destroyed in these circumstances. Furthe as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Se made clear to the right hon. Gentleman, it is usual police to allow the person to witness the destruc these documents if this is requested. That latter was, I understand, temporarily withdraw Nottinghamshire because of the administrative p placed on the police, but I can say that as from the the dispute the force has reverted to the prac acceding to requests to witness destruction. This wil not only to persons acquitted after the end of the but to any other cases where fingerprints and photo are still with the police.

I said that at present there was no legal requiren the police to destroy fingerprints and photographs offer the facility to witness the destruction o documents. But there will be such a requirement future, with the implementation of the main provis the new Police and Criminal Evidence Act at the next year. Section 64 of the Act will requi fingerprints are destroyed if the person is cleared offence or if he is not proceeded against and not cau The Act will give a specific right to the indivi witness their destruction if he so requests. The poli be required to keep the fingerprints for a set, but period of about a month, in order that the person con has the opportunity to witness their destruction. Af period they will be destroyed by the police.

That requirement will be repeated in the c practice on identification. The code will also gov taking of photographs and provide similar obligatio duties on the police in relation to photographs as in to fingerprints. Failure to comply with the provis a code will render a police officer liable to disci

proceedings. I believe that underwriting these obligations and duties by law backed up by disciplinary sanctions is a significant and important step forward, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that, and will regard these provisions at least as progressive and helpful in relation to the problems that he has outlined to the House.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the issue of the right to witness the destruction of fingerprints. That subject was clearly given substantial attention during the dispute, and tonight's debate will obviously give it further publicity. I have no doubt that the NUM will take whatever steps it considers necessary to keep its members informed of their rights. Again, the code of practice will formalise the suspect's rights, by requiring those fingerprinted or photographed to be told of their right to witness destruction at the time when the fingerprint or photograph is taken.

I do not see that it is necessary, beyond that, to require the police to go through the process of highlighting those rights on each and every occasion after acquittal or after the decision not to proceed, whether or not it is of the slightest interest to the person concerned. We already place substantial burdens on the police, and I am reluctant to do more where it is not specifically needed.

The question of returning the prints to a station at which it would be convenient for the person concerned to witness destruction is, however, a different matter. I fully take the right hon. Gentleman's point that an offer to witness destruction at the other end of the country would contain within it a pretty powerful disincentive against taking up the offer. I have no doubt that, if a chief constable in one part of the country received a request to witness destruction from somebody living in another part of the country, and the prints had not already been destroyed, he would consider sympathetically any suggestion that they be forwarded to a police station that was more convenient for the person concerned. I am sure that the police will accept the sort of proposition that the right hon. Gentleman has put to the House, and I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of the Association of Chief Police Officers. I have reason to believe that it will agree to accept it.

I come to the question of records. The records at Scotland Yard are kept only in relation to recordable offences. These are offences which, broadly speaking, carry liability to imprisonment. Local records are kept in relation to a wider spread of criminal offences. Let me explain first what happens with the national records. When a person is arrested for a recordable offence, the local police notify Scotland Yard of the fact of his arrest. If the person has no previous convictions, a new file is opened in his name and a Criminal Records Office number is allocated to him. If the person is subsequently not prosecuted or is acquitted, that file and the CRO number are destroyed. If, on the other hand, the person does have a previous criminal record, the entry in respect of the offence for which he is arrested has marked against it clearly that he has been acquitted, or the offence has not been proceeded with. I understand that similar arrangements apply in relation to local records.

Let me also say something about the police national computer. The criminal names index on the PNC is, in effect, no more than an index to the central collection of criminal records at Scotland Yard. Although steps are in hand to computerise conviction records, these are not in operation at present. A person will not be identified on the PNC as having a criminal record unless he has a record at Scotland Yard and a CRO number. I have explained that a person with no previous record and who has been acquitted would have his file at Scotland Yard and the CRO number destroyed. At the same time, his CRO number and name would be removed from the police national computer.

I have explained the circumstances in which police records are destroyed and those in which they are kept. The allegation that those records which are kept will be disclosed to credit brokers and other such people is totally without foundation. Police records are confidential and their improper disclosure is an offence against police disciplinary regulations. If the right hon. Gentleman has any evidence to support his view that police information has been disclosed, he should report it to the appropriate chief constable concerned.

I hope that that detailed explanation of the position will satisfy the right hon. Gentleman that the systems and procedures for the retention and destruction of police records are adequate and that they take account of the concerns that he expressed.

I do not believe that it would be right to make any special provision or arrangement in respect of criminal records related purely to offences connected with the miners' dispute. Safeguards are already there and further protection is at hand when the Police and Criminal Evidence Act is implemented.

Moreover, there is no reason why criminal records of offences committed during the dispute should be treated in any different fashion to criminal records in relation to any other criminal offences. Those who have criminal convictions will, however, benefit from the protection which the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act will afford them after the passage of the requisite time. In the case of minor sentences, the rehabilitation period will be relatively short. In the case of heavier sentences, particularly sentences of imprisonment, the rehabilitation periods will be much longer, and a conviction which results in a prison sentence of over two and a half years will never become spent.

In conclusion, I make a simple point. Those who are cleared of criminal offences have a right to expect that police records will not be kept. Those records will not be kept. But those who are convicted of criminal offences can expect that there will be a police record kept on them. That is one of the prices to pay for behaviour which led to their conviction in the first place.

I hope that what I have said will do two things. First, I hope that it will assure the right hon. Gentleman that proper steps will be taken to deal with the specific issues he raised about destruction and the prospects of witnessing such destruction. Secondly, I hope he will agree that, in providing such encouragement to chief police officers to make this an easy proposition now, that will provide a modicum of assistance to achieving the right hon. Gentleman's overriding concern, which is to bring a sense of healing and community back into those areas which have been so heavily afflicted by this ghastly dispute.

I think that he will also agree that, in the longer term, the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act will provide the statutory backing for the kind of process he would like to see.

Mr. Mason: I am obliged to the Minister for that sympathetic and understanding reply.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 March 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Pensioners

9.34 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I rise to ask leave to present to the House a petition on behalf of the National Pensioners Convention. It contains over 1 million signatures and has been signed by pensioners throughout the country. All hon. Members will have in their constituencies many thousands of men and women who are retired and pensioners.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled; the Humble Petition of the National Pensioners Convention sheweth that they are concerned at;

The present situation of State Retirement Pensions which denies pensioners the right of choice, dignity, independence and security in retirement;

The increasingly heavy burden of fuel costs borne by pensioners which undermines their health and well being;

All hon. Members will have received in recent weeks many letters from pensioners expressing their concern about the payment of fuel costs in view of the severe weather that Britain has recently experienced.

The petition continues:

The erosion of public transport services on which pensioners depend.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will;

Make an immediate commitment to a pension level of not less than one-half of average earnings for a married couple, and not less than one-third for a single person;

Ensure pensioners' ability to maintain warm and well lit homes with adequate heating allowances covering all fuels without a means test, and with total relief from standing charges;

Extend the statutory free fare scheme recently enacted for London pensioners throughout the United Kingdom.

I am proud to present this petition to the House on behalf of the millions of men and women, now pensioners, who, during their working life, worked for, and in many cases loyally served, this country in times of need.

I, like many other hon. Members, express to the Government the hope that they will take note of and act on the views expressed in the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Crayford School

9.37 am

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by 224 parents and governors of Crayford school and residents of the surrounding area. Crayford school is within my constituency and most of the petitioners are my constituents:

The humble petition of the Parents and Governors of Crayford School and Residents of the surrounding area sheweth

That the council of the London Borough of Bexley has proposed to cease to maintain Crayford School which is to be put forward to the Secretary of State for Education and Science for his approval.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Secretary of State to reject the proposals of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley to close Crayford School and see fit to ensure that the Council of the London Borough of Bexley will continue to maintain the aforesaid school with its existing status for the foreseeable future in its present position in Iron Mill Lane, Crayford in the London Borough of Bexley.

I wholeheartedly support the petition because Crayford school is the only secondary school within the local community and its closure would be a severe blow to the local population. The decision has been referred to the Secretary of State and I join my constituents in urging him to reverse the decision of the local education authority.

To lie upon the Table.

Nuclear Waste (Disposal)

9.39 am

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I beg to move,

That this House, while congratulating the electricity supply industry on the production of some 18 per cent. of its power from nuclear sources as compared with 48 per cent. in France, and recognising the need following the miners' dispute to have a diversity of fuels available for the manufacture of electricity in the United Kingdom, acknowledges the need to adopt a satisfactory policy for the disposal of nuclear waste to ensure that people and the environment are protected from any hazards to which they may be exposed; expresses the need to hold a full and comprehensive inquiry into the siting of such repositories and into the several options technology has made available to the industry in such a manner that the public may participate and be fully informed of all relevant facts; and asks the Government to consider the prospect of employing the planning machinery contained in sections 47 to 49 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 relating to a planning inquiry commission.

We are lucky that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), is able to be with us until my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Minister responsible, can get here. He has been delayed in Paris, but it is expected that he will be here between 10 and 10.30 am. He will then be able to listen to the many invaluable contributions of my colleagues.

In the United Kingdom the electricity supply industry produces some 18 per cent. of its power from nuclear sources, compared with figures of 48 per cent. for France, 46 per cent. for Belgium, and 18 per cent. for the Federal Republic of Germany. Thus, it is a very substantial industry. The year-long strike by the National Union of Mineworkers has convinced many that without alternative energy sources for electricity the United Kingdom might have been administered by Scargillism, with all the revolutionary content that that would involve. That could have had a significant bearing on the cost of electricity for all consumers.

Many people fail to appreciate that nuclear electricity, the manufacture of radio isotopes, and X-ray facilities in hospitals produce waste that must be dealt with. The Government's policy on this issue was outlined in the 1982 White Paper, which sought to accommodate the industry's requirements with the inegrity of the environment. I have noted that in the 1985 report—the consultation exercise on the draft principles for the protection of the environment — the Government have added a further significant dimension, with which I agree. Page 7 states:

"The Government recognises that waste management policies will not be successful unless there is public support based on a full and accurate assessment of the situation."

Of course, people are perplexed by the bewilderment caused by a force that is both intangible and unseen, even though it is easily measurable. Such apprehension was felt about the growth of the railways, the use of the car and the passage of aircraft. The risks were felt to be intolerable, but gradually the majority began to appreciate that there were long-term advantages, and that it was safer to travel by car than to move along the highway on a horse.

A public inquiry is essential to examine local fears, to examine propositions in depth, to extract the facts, and to site a nuclear repository in an acceptable location. It is well recognised in the House that high level waste is no concern of the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive. It comprises fission products and actinides in liquid form, and will continue to be kept at Sellafield, until at some future date it will be vitrified in borosilicate glass, ready for long-term disposal.

Lower levels of waste have been entrusted to NIREX. Radiation from high level waste is intense, but the quantity is small and is estimated at 4,300 cu m by the year 2000 AD. On the other hand, intermediate and low-level waste tends to be bulky and much less radioactive. The figures for the year 2000 AD are assessed to be 90,000 and 500,000 cu m respectively. The options available for disposal are limited. Discharges into the deep sea in the north-east Atlantic have been temporarily suspended. I hope that the Minister will say something about the prospects of dumping nuclear waste at sea, following the recent moratorium. As that was a useful option, will it be revived?

In 1984, the Government agreed to comply with a requirement from the Paris Commission for the gradual elimination of radioactive discharges into the Irish sea from Sellafield, and to suspend the dumping of low-level waste into the Atlantic, 600 miles off Land's End, pending the Holliday report, which has now been published, and the report of the ad hoc scientific review arising out of the London dumping convention. That is due in September 1985, together with the Nuclear Energy Agency's site suitability review.

As some 200 to 300 tonnes of low level waste were dumped in that way every year between 1966 and 1982, permanent suspension could negate one of the most useful options available to the United Kingdom. Another option available to the United Kingdom is to fire the waste into space, but that is not recommended, as the cost would be inordinate. The remaining option involves deposits on land, together with openings which have been and will continue to be created by technology. For example, Ensec Ltd. has proposals for the location of long-lived intermediate level waste in deep boreholes beneath the sea.

But perhaps I may turn my attention to the Elstow type of repository or trench. This functions through the inhibiting factors of muliple barriers which prevent the movement in and out of waterflows. The first barrier is the insolubility of the waste and the supporting concrete and bitumen matrix. The second barrier is the impenetrability of the canisters containing waste. At the extreme end of time, I am informed by the Swedes that a 10 mm copper canister could last for about 10 million years. That simply illustrates the capability, but a lot of waste of lesser intensity would completely decay within 300 to 400 years, and would need to be placed in much less expensive containers.

The third barrier would depend upon the absorption capacity of the clay surrounding the canisters, its ability to thwart the movement of water. However, there are three further far-field barriers which apply more particularly to deeper sites. I should emphasise that these barriers are designed to prevent the movement of radionuclides into the wider environment and into the public water supply. Since public safety is the prime consideration, it is not surprising that the memorandum on the principles for the protection of the environment spells out the safeguards. Apart from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, which gives the Secretary of State independent advice, and which is broadly represented and may, indeed, include new men, at a later stage, there are several other procedural safeguards. They can be grouped

under three headings. First, there are authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to ensure the maintenance of radiological standards, in particular in relation to the radiological impact of disposal. Secondly, there is licensing under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Nuclear Installations Act 1965 established that the facility must be designed, constructed and operated to the required safety standards. Thirdly, planning permission, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, as subsequently amended, should ensure that the site is suitable for the use proposed, taking social and other considerations into account.

A comparatively recent innovation in the British system — thanks to the United States and France — is the environmental assessment referred to in chapter 5 of the principles. It is designed to improve the quality of decisions made. Extensive consultations are required, and at least 16 references have to be undertaken with the local authorities.

The European directive will make mandatory the assessment of the environmental effects of certain large projects. Meanwhile, until acceptance by the Council of Ministers under oil and gas operations, the environmental assessment has been accepted as good practice, though without legal force. In the nuclear industry, it has become established as an administrative requirement pursuant to chapter 5 of the principles.

The timetable will necessarily be long, because of the incorporation of special procedures and the desire at once to inform the public of the facts and to seek their participation. I have endeavoured to piece together a projected timetable which may be of interest to the House.

Notification of other sites could take place in May or June 1985. Presentation of a special development order to the House of Commons to make possible the geological testing of all three sites nominated, subject to a negative resolution and one and a half hours debate, could take place in July 1985. Allowing about a year for geological drilling and collation of the information, we arrive at July 1986. A series of consultations, and the drafting of the environmental assessment — in part running in parallel with the processes already mentioned—might take about a year, to July 1987. Presentation of an application for planning permission to develop one or all three sites, coupled with an environmental assessment, might take us to 1987-88.

Dr. Flowers made the following observation during Mr. P. Critchley's evidence to the Sizewell inquiry:

"I think we must see that it would be three to four years at least from now before we have a document ready to support a planning application for the construction of a shallow repository."

A comprehensive public inquiry under the Town and Country Planning Act might take little less than a year, taking us to 1988-89. There would then be the inspector's report, consideration by the Government, debate in Parliament and the Secretary of State's decision, which might be expected in 1990.

If authorisation was granted, it would have to be obtained, licences granted and the facilities commissioned and constructed. That might take two years, or until 1992 at the earliest.

In France, the French national radioactive waste agency, ANDRA, has been invited to find a new site to follow La Hague. The French allow two years to complete procedures for obtaining building authorisations and a further two years for construction. Commissioning would thus take place in the early 1990s.

The planning exercise will inevitably be a long one. In my judgment, the most appropriate procedure would be a planning inquiry commission under sections 47 to 50 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. Section 48(2) states:

"Any of the matters mentioned . . . may be referred to any such commission . . . if it appears expedient . . . that the question whether the proposed development should be permitted to be carried out should be the subject of a special inquiry on either of the following grounds — *(a)* there are considerations of national or regional importance . . ."

there is no doubt that in this case matters of regional importance are involved—

"*(b)* the technical or scientific aspects of the proposed development are of so unfamiliar a character as to jeopardise a proper determination of that question . . ."

It is important that one should recognise that the planning inquiry procedure has been on the statute book since 1971. It has not been used, yet it is not unserviceable. Wherever the respository is to be sited, let the public have the full facts in a comprehensive examination of the issues involved. Section 48 is tailor-made for the job.

Against that background, the battle currently being waged by the newspapers in Bedford is in my view premature. It is bound to bore even the most persistent sympathisers. More extreme stories have to be discovered in rapid succession to maintain local interest, and the facts that there are have become immersed in emotion and alarm. I have consistently adopted the policy of waiting for the facts before reaching judgment rather than prejudging the case without the evidence. A number of people seem to have fallen for that fallacy. I trust that my attitude will be fully understood and will not continue to be misrepresented by sections of the local press.

My constituents are concerned about proximity — about the distance of the site at Elstow from a population of 135,000. Will the Minister address his mind to that point? In answer to a question from the Billingham Band, Mr. A. Faussat, deputy manager of ANDRA, stated that population density was not a criterion in site selection and that one of the proposed new sites was 3 km from a population centre of 80,000. It should also be noted that the radio isotope manufacturer, Amersham International, is situated within housing settlements at Amersham and, indeed, in Cardiff, the new AGR power stations being constructed at Heysham and Hartlepool are relatively near to centres of population. Further, there is no evidence of fatalities from ionising radiation from nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom. That exemplary record appears to compare favourably with the difficulties experienced with coal-fired stations.

I should like to read a short extract from the book by Alan Cottrell, FRS, entitled, "How Safe is Nuclear Energy?" On page 90 he states:

"if we really want to worry about releases of radioactivity from the earth, we should concern ourselves much more with emissions of radon-creating uranium from coal-fired power stations and from large earth-moving operations, for these present radioactive hazards to future generations which, although extremely minute, are nevertheless larger than those from deep underground nuclear waste deposits."

Nevertheless, this matter is referred to on page 21 of the report on the consultation exercise on the draft principles, prepared as recently as 1985, where it is stated

[Mr. T. H. H. Skeet]

that the size and distribution of local populations is a relevant planning consideration, and that the risk of a fatal cancer to any member of the public should be less than one in a million per year. That alone is a remarkable safeguard.

I see that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is now in his place. I welcome him back to the House of Commons after his return from Paris. I should like to ask him whether I am right in assuming that, apart from natural radiation, the radiation at the perimeter fence of a repository or tumulus would be virtually nil, and therefore nil in Bedford?

The principles also seek to establish a satisfactory framework for the construction and operation of disposal facilities so that future generations will not be exposed to risks unacceptable to the present generation.

The proximity factor is common to a number of letters that I have received from constituents. It is a serious point to which the Government will have to address themselves, wherever the developer locates a repository. Can the Minister tell me whether proximity is a radiological consideration as well as a planning one, or a factor confined to principles arising under the Town and Country Planning Acts?

Some of my constituents are advising that low and intermediate level wastes should be stored at nuclear facilities and power stations rather than at a green site nuclear repository, which might be attended with some difficulties. They cite the case of the projected Sizewell B where provision is being made to store waste in modules at the station. However, there is a clear statement in the fifth report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, which advises the Government:

"We are firmly of the opinion that these wastes should be disposed of as soon as practicable. We consider that each generation should deal as far as possible with its own waste arisings and has a duty to minimise the responsibility it passes on to future generations. Provided wastes are safely contained placing them underground in a way that removes any need for future handling has clear radiological advantages."

There appears to have been a little urgency in the voice of Dr. Ron Flowers, director of fuel processing for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, when he emphasised that the packaging techniques for nuclear wastes such as I have described would last 500 years—well beyond the point of total decay of the content. He also stressed that the wastes could be stored safely in existing nuclear installations at no significant extra cost to the electricity industry while the political obstacles to new and permanent repositories were being overcome.

I am mindful that the comparative assessment study of disposal and retrievable storage options being undertaken by the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to determine the best practical environmental options, as suggested in the fifth and tenth reports of the Royal Commission on environmenal pollution, has yet to report. I should nevertheless appreciate some guidance from my hon. Friend the Minister. I should like to stress the obvious merit of early publication.

Although studies have been undertaken with a view to reducing substantially the volume of low-level waste by conventional incineration and recycling and treatment of the gases produced, also for intermediate level waste, what has been the outcome of investigations in tunnelling from the shore out to sea for the establishment of underwater repositories? What has been the outcome of investigations into the acquisition of a salt cavern in the United Kingdom for the final placement of longer-life intermediate wastes and vitrified higher level materials? It might also be relevant to inquire whether it has been found feasible to incinerate fission products and actinides in nuclear reactors, and to invite the industry to participate in the destruction of its own waste.

The timetable for choosing a site would be long due to the painstaking procedures that must be followed. I nevertheless recommend the course in planning that I have advocated. As nothing has yet been decided, there will be every opportunity to object at the most suitable time. That time is certainly not now, before any application has been lodged by the developer and before consultations have got under way. As the local press has prejudged the issue, it seems that there is little point in their minds in holding a public inquiry to ascertain the facts. Members of Parliament should stand back, examine the problem in all of its dimensions, assess it on the facts and decide in the community's interest.

The press and the county council have adopted a county approach. On that basis, in which county could a repository be located, even if such a repository is recognised as the best environmenal option? Could it be located anywhere in the United Kingdom if the matter is approached on a county basis, with everyone objecting in succession? My reply to those who want the waste to be stored at nuclear installations is to ask "Is Amersham to keep all its waste? Will the same apply to Hartlepool and Heysham?"

Public safety is paramount, and the Government would be failing in their duty if they omitted to establish that concept in theory and practice. A site should be chosen only on the basis of the risk or the probability of fatal cancer to any member of the public from a repository being no greater than one in 1 million per year. For the sake of succeeding generations, movement of radioactivity should not be permitted to show a significant increase above that naturally occurring in the general vicinity. Perhaps I might illustrate that point by quoting what Dr. Lewis Roberts of Harwell said in November 1984 at a British nuclear forum:

"no one individual, at any time in the future, should suffer more radiation from the operation of a repository than he would get by moving from a low-radioactivity part of the country, like London, to an area with higher natural radioactivity, like Aberdeen or Cornwall. Moving from one to another was not usually thought of as a risk."

The Atomic Energy Authority is conducting a study on the behaviour of radionuclides in geological formations beyond the repository. When will it report? The findings will be material to the Elstow issue. Materials technology is also vital as it will doubtless improve the containment capability of canisters and the performance of cement as a matrix and as an external containment material.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister doubt the ability of containers to hold their charge until decay renders it innocuous, and of cement to perform reliably during the term required? He might be interested in a paper by Atkinson and Hearne of Harwell of October 1984 which says:

"Sulphate attack and $Ca(OH)_2$ leaching have been identified as the most likely processes causing degradation in repository environments. Corrosion of reinforcement and alkali-aggregate reaction are likely to be somewhat less deleterious whereas carbonation, action of micro-organisms, crystallisation, environmental cycling and radiation effects are likely to be

negligible. The engineering lifetime of a 1 m thick reinforced concrete slab has been estimated from the data available. The lifetime could be as short as 350 years for a concrete based on Ordinary Portland Cement, but is likely to be in the range of 500—1000 years for Sulphate Resisting Portland Cement and may be as long as 3000 years for SRPC in the deep repository."

Problems will arise for the industry 30 years after the building of the Magnox stations. They will have to be replaced by new plant, and old reactors will have to be decommissioned. Well ahead of that date, thinking will have to be done and feasible plans will have to be reached for disposing of abandoned resources. That is more of a problem for the Department of Energy than for the Department of the Environment, though the latter will have its say.

When alarm, stimulated by fear of the unknown, builds up, it is essential to have a public inquiry to dispel many of the monstrous chimeras. While the Government have an open mind, nuclear waste must be discussed freely in a public forum. I welcome the opportunity for that in the 1980s. The public will be richer for the information derived from a clash of opinions, and for the shattering of many illusions. We have traditional methods for settling these great issues. While these matters are being considered, the Government cannot expect local authorities to defend their positions and yet be penalised for the expenditure involved. The Department may consider that later when it comes to make some accommodation.

Finally, we have an environmentally sensitive Government. I have noted their actions on siting airports, responding to accidents at Sellafield, pursuing broad studies into realistic alternatives and tackling the pesticide nettle. I detect changes in their inner counsels about Elstow. However, it does not require the clamour of masses to promote change. The Select Committee on the Environment, which is considering this matter and hopes to report by October 1985, may presage the course ahead.

10.10 am

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on choosing this topic for debate today. I am sure that it is most timely and that the House will have listened with interest to the detailed and responsible way in which he introduced his motion. He displayed his technical knowledge and understanding of these matters to the benefit of the House and of those outside who take a close interest in them.

I shall deal less with the technical than with the political and human aspects of the problem. Hon. Members will know that on Teesside the last few months of our lives have been dominated by a proposal by NIREX to place nuclear waste in the anhydride mine at Billingham. That caused an outcry in Billingham and from the surrounding area. I congratulate the Minister on the fact that the Government responded by withdrawing the proposal.

I shall address my remarks to the House on the basis of that experience. I appeal to the Government and the industry to realise that the nuclear industry will be successful and the technology to develop it will be allowed only with public consent and support. It is absolutely vital that we have, not secrecy and misunderstandings, but the fullest possible public discussion and exposure of the details of the case. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remarks about following planning procedures that will allow that to happen. Indeed, the Government are to a considerable extent allowing that to happen. However, some aspects of Government policy have made the position much worse.

I shall deal first with energy policy. The lack of clarity about the Government's energy policy is giving rise to fear and uncertainty. We do not even have a vague certainty whether the Government intend to pursue a vigorous policy of nuclear power generation. We can only search Ministers' answers to parliamentary questions, their occasional speeches and other statements from Government sources to ascertain how much reliance the Government will place on gas, oil, coal, nuclear power generation, other non-renewable sources of energy and renewable sources of energy, which at present constitute only a small part of our energy needs.

My first criticism of the Government is that they unnecessarily allow people to have greater fears than may be necessary, because of the lack of a clear energy strategy. That is remarkable, because we are an energy rich nation and have the good fortune to sit on enormous supplies of coal, to have oil under the North sea and possibly even more oil elsewhere, and to have gas. We are the most energy rich nation in Europe. In those circumstances, it is remarkable that the Government have not made their strategy clear.

In the light of our rich energy resources, it is natural for people to ask why we need to rely on the nuclear option to the extent that we do. My colleagues and I believe that we need to retain the nuclear option. I visited Japan recently and looked at the work on nuclear power generation there. Japan is a major competitor to much of our industry, and in future it will have a substantial thriving nuclear power industry. Other countries, such as France, also have that option.

The source of energy to our industry is inevitably a major part of the equation that determines our competitiveness. For many of our industries, the cost of energy is a substantial part of their overheads burden and profoundly influences how competitive they can be. As we remain a great industrial nation, albeit not as great as we used to be, we need to ensure that our industries have a potential source of nuclear energy available in future, which could provide a cheap source of energy. Our competitors could completely undermine some of our industries if the whole of the energy equation were to come together in 50 or 30 years' time to make our position grossly uncompetitive. We therefore need to retain the option, for that and other reasons.

On the other hand, there is no justification for following the road which the Prime Minister and other Government Ministers wish to take, which is to adopt a substantial nuclear strategy, to rely on nuclear energy power generation and to minimise our reliance on our other sources of energy. We should not adopt that policy.

If the Government made clear what they see as the future of our nuclear power industry, we could have a much clearer debate on the disposal of waste arising from it and the many other industries which the hon. Gentleman mentioned which give rise to nuclear waste. I urge the Government to make clear their strategy on nuclear power generation within an overall energy policy. I repeat that if the Government want to continue along the road of nuclear power generation, they will have to produce a much greater degree of public support for their policy than they have up to now. The method of disposal of nuclear waste is a major factor in people's minds.

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

It is understandable that people living in rural areas are very concerned that their areas might be chosen as sites for the disposal of nuclear waste. On the basis of our experience at Billingham, I cannot think of anything more calculated to give rise to public anxiety and concern than a proposal to put nuclear waste underneath people's houses. Such decisions create a degree of opposition to the whole nuclear industry that has to be seen to be believed. In the case of Billingham, it was a remarkably stupid decision. Clearly, density of population must be one of the factors—although not an overwhelming factor—in the choice of sites for the disposal of nuclear waste. It was not surprising that there was an outcry at Billingham.

I believe that opposition to proposals for the disposal of nuclear waste can be overcome only if people can be reassured and can feel that matters are not being kept secret. Recent events have not helped to reassure them in that respect. The dreadful saga of Sellafield in 1983 and afterwards created grave doubts in people's minds about the willingness of the nuclear industry to come clean and display to the public the difficulties and dangers that can arise in the handling of nuclear substances. Secrecy is counter-productive. The authorities may think that by keeping quiet it is possible to calm public fears, but that has not proved to be the case. As a result of the investigation and activities of Greenpeace, many factors have emerged. Rather than having secrecy, it is far better to have a full public announcement giving details of the risks and dangers that may be involved. Such information should be given as soon as it becomes available.

I appeal to the nuclear industry not to be secretive or to cover up details of the disposal of nuclear waste. If accidents happen in the industry, it is vital to publish the full facts, so that when claims are made as to the safety of sites—in Bedfordshire or wherever it may be—the public can feel confident that what is being claimed is accurate and that they can trust what is being said. I hope that the industry and the Government will ensure that there is the most open debate and discussion on all such matters.

The people of Teesside and Billingham fought a tremendous campaign to prevent the disposal of nuclear waste under Billingham. The leaders of Billingham's campaign against nuclear dumping deserve to be congratulated on the effectiveness of their actions. It was a great encouragement to people, such as myself, who do not believe in groups breaking the law to achieve their ends. The Billingham campaign was carried out within the law, using all the available democratic means, including those in this place. As a result, the Minister was persuaded to reverse the decision. I hope that the people of Bedfordshire will take some heart from our success in Billingham.

Mr. Skeet: I have followed closely the hon. Gentleman's remarks about Billingham. I remind him that ICI owns the anhydride mine and that ICI has its own problems on Teesside. It has a cyanide plant there. It has enough troubles on the chemical front. Does the hon. Gentleman think that, on that basis, ICI perhaps decided that it would not add to its problems?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: That may be part of the reason why ICI took its decision to oppose the use of its mine, but there were probably bigger reasons than that, such as the ones to which I have been referring. As I have been arguing, it is not simply a technical problem. We dealing with people's fears. People's individual inter and the community's interests are involved. As politicia we must take account of those interests. The techn problems with which the hon. Member for Bedfordsh North dealt in his speech can be ascertained, weighed and controlled much more easily than can peop opinions and fears. I do not think that the nuclear indus the Government or previous Governments have b sufficiently sensitive to the need to calm people's fears to take people along with them in their arguments. A g deal more time and resources — I particularly st resources—need to be devoted to ensuring that pe understand exactly what is being proposed and what the threats.

When we talk about nuclear waste or nuclear po generation, many people think that we are talking ab a bomb; they do not think that what is involved is disposal of nuclear waste. I do not doubt that many pe in Billingham thought that there was a proposal to p bomb underneath their houses. That sort of fear misunderstanding has to be overcome. We must rea that people's minds are confused and mixed up. They not understand the technical details in the way that t are understood by those who have studied th Therefore, although it is important that the techn aspects should be investigated in great depth, adeq consideration must also be given to people's fears. Billingham, those fears began to affect house sa because of the general uncertainty involved. It was felt the value of their houses would drop, that people wo not want to move into the town, and that industries wo not want to move there.

I believe that the fears about nuclear waste are alm certainly exaggerated. On Teesside we have the lar concentration of hazardous material in Britain. We h petrochemical plants north and south of the River T We have heavy engineering and other plants. We have largest proportion of hazardous and waste materials t found in any part of Britain. All sorts of hazard materials regularly travel by road and rail through community. Perhaps NIREX thought that as we ar used to the hazardous materials we would not mind ano one, but this was the straw that broke the camel's ba

In the past, I have fought for schemes such as Hazchem scheme for the labelling of hazardous wa when they are transported. People should worry n about other hazardous substances being transported our roads, not least liquid gas, which has caused s devastating accidents in other parts of the world, suc at Seveso. If we want all the things that we have, suc plastics and other materials, we must learn how to with the waste. However, let us not over-exaggerate nuclear threat and forget the other hazardous substance think that they are not as dangerous.

My main point this morning is to make a plea that e possible effort and resource is put into taking the pu along with this argument, reassuring people and gi them full information so that their understandable fear overcome. The Government have done a reasonable jo this, but I urge them to do more and continue with consultations, and particularly I urge them to encou the industry to be open and unsecretive.

The industry should involve the public as much as i in discussions of these matters, otherwise it wil crippled in the way that it has been in the United St

and fear will become so great that public opinion will stop the industry from making any progress. If that happens, an important opportunity for Britain might be lost.

10.32 am

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth); and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on giving the House its first opportunity to debate the widespread issues that surround this difficult question.

The House will know that I speak as the Member of Parliament for Mid-Bedfordshire, which is the constituency within which Elstow is sited. Elstow is the place where NIREX, at least until the recent announcement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, has been concentrating its efforts to dump low and short-life intermediate level nuclear waste.

This debate gives me the opportunity to do a number of things. First, as Member of Parliament for that area, I can, in some detail, say why I strongly oppose the proposals of NIREX. I do so from the standpoint of someone who strongly supports the programme of nuclear energy policy. We need nuclear energy as part of our overall energy provision. We need it to keep our children and grandchildren warm, both now, as 18 per cent. of our electricity comes from nuclear energy, and increasingly into the coming century and the centuries ahead.

The Government have to overcome the problem of nuclear waste. I quote my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who said that this is a management problem, and in some senses more a management than a technical problem. He recognises that there are still technical questions to be answered, but he is right that it is a management problem. I am sure that he intended to comprehend the fact that this is also a political problem.

If we do not recognise that these problems are political, we shall go down the wrong road time and again. I can draw an analogy with airports, about which I have some experience. The notion that we can slough off a problem of this nature to public inquiries and thereby think that it will go away is wrong. We have to hold public inquiries, and there will have to be a major public inquiry before any final decision as to how or where nuclear waste of this nature is dumped, dealt with or stored. However, to think that this decision can be passed to a judge, an inspector or a multiplicity of inspectors under a planning inquiry commission and get away from the political problem is fundamentally to misunderstand the nature of the beast.

I believe that until recently, and to some extent even now, we have been going about it the wrong way. NIREX has certainly been going about it the wrong way from the outset. The notion that we can simply take one place for low and intermediate levels of nuclear waste—Elstow—and another place for longer-lived nuclear waste — Billingham — and then use money and energy to persuade the local population that it will be all right is gravely mistaken.

Nothing illustrates that point better than the Billingham campaign. I hope that I shall not be thought to be over-cynical when I say that the Billingham campaign succeeded for two reasons, not for one. There is no doubt that the enormous weight of local opposition was a major and serious cause. However, I ask myself, as the Member of Parliament representing Elstow, whether the campaign would have come to so swift and, for them, happy a conclusion if the anhydrite mine had not been owned by ICI, and if ICI, having at the outset shown complicity, had not then changed its mind.

I know something about compulsory purchase procedures. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends not to shrink from the notion of compulsory purchase if the right site requires it. But, as a lawyer, I believe that to seek the compulsory purchase not only of the right to use part of a mine but of all the access ways and requirements that would have been involved would be a legal maze from which we would never have emerged. I believe that one of the real reasons why we so quickly got rid of the Billingham idea was that, as soon as ICI showed its implacable opposition, the idea became an impossibility.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: One of the reasons why ICI changed its mind was that Billingham is almost an ICI town. ICI's employees, expressing their strength of feeling about the proposals, led ICI to take that decision. Therefore, it was a political decision.

Mr. Lyell: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) will accept both points. There was real and profound local opposition.

However, at Elstow we have a different position. One of the prime reasons why Elstow was chosen as a potential site — indeed the preferred site — was that the site is owned by the CEGB, which is one of the partners in NIREX. That makes life a great deal easier for it. That is not the only reason. Elstow has good communications, and NIREX argues that it has a suitable geological basis in the Oxford clay. However, the fact that the CEGB owns the site was a powerful incentive for NIREX to choose Elstow, and this represents a big difference between Billingham and Elstow.

I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will not underestimate the profundity of the local opposition in Bedfordshire. We did not have advance notice of the decision, as they did in Billingham, and perhaps the feeling has been a little slower in building up. I shall describe the level of that opposition, because I have no doubt that rational, sensible people, as we are in Bedfordshire, are profoundly worried. The breadth of the opposition that I am receiving and the nature of the people from whom I am receiving it—I am confident that it is coming from over 90 per cent. of the population—shows the deep nature of the political problem that must be tackled.

While I speak for one county and am, therefore, conscious of the "not in my back yard" syndrome, I am sure that there would be similar opposition were it in Hertford, Hereford or Hampshire. I choose the names carefully, so that it will not be thought that they will necessarily be the next sites to be chosen!

I also take the opportunity to comment on the handling of the matter from a parliamentary point of view, because I believe it is undesirable that the Department of the Environment should not only have to field the questions on how the matter should be judged, but should also have to argue the case for the prosecution.

Questions on the technicalities and options should go to the Department of Energy; and questions on how the issue is weighed up and decided should go to the Department of the Environment, which the Secretary of

[Mr. Lyell]

State has been at pains to say is standing back from the technical issues so as to be seen to be taking an impartial view.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will seek to take an impartial view, but in public presentation it is appalling if the same Department is forced to be prosecution, judge and jury in its own case. I hope that serious thought at the highest level will be given to changing that way of dealing with the issue in a parliamentary way, so making it easier to have an open and clear discussion of this important issue.

Although an earlier Parliament tried to set up a suitable procedure, the planning inquiry commission procedure is probably not the right type of procedure in these matters.

I shall now explain why, as the representative of the Elstow area, I strongly oppose the present ill-thought-out proposal.

First, the Elstow site is far too close to major centres of population, the most major centre being the town of Bedford, part of which I represent, though much the larger part is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North. The proposed site is only three miles from the town of Bedford and is close to the villages of Elstow, Wilstead and Houghton Conquest. The degree of anxiety in those villages can hardly be overstated.

Secondly, the technology is unproven. Many assertions are made about the one in a million or one in 10 million risk, the life of concrete, copper, and so on, but all are unproven. Other responsible countries with major nuclear industries—in particular, Sweden and West Germany—have rejected the idea of shallow land burial, mainly because of what is described as the problem of capping the site. Such sites are, by definition, waterlogged. They are below the water table. The published literature, from the Government and all concerned, recognises that in the fullness of time—and nobody can put an accurate time scale on it—water will seep into, totally surround and finally fill the site. The Oxford clays which Elstow enjoys are strongly alkaline, and that can have a corrosive effect on canisters and cement.

The life of a concrete trench is finite. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North put forward some of the technical arguments. We have often heard about the long life of concrete. I do not want to be cynical or to raise unnecessary fears, but one need only think of high alumina cement, of the effects of the use of concrete in Ronan Point and of the way in which concrete has broken down in many towns and cities, including great engineering projects, to appreciate that we do not yet know enough about concrete to give a confident estimate of its life.

When the University of London gave instructions before the war for the Senate House to be built—that great building in Bloomsbury—it told the architects that it wanted a building which could be sure to last for 500 years. It was built in dovetailed granite blocks.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The hon. and learned Gentleman is knowledgeable on the subject about which he is speaking. I am extremely concerned because we currently store nuclear waste in shallow burial in the county of Cumbria. If his assertion is correct, the whole of that part of west Cumberland must be at risk. I hope that the Minister will give reassurance on the point remembering that we do not want to upset the apple cart and disturb public confidence too much.

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Gentleman will know that what is stored in open trenches in west Cumbria is low level nuclear waste. The trenches are not even lined. I understand that plastic bags are virtually just dumped in shallow open trenches. I have not seen the process and do not want to misrepresent the position, but I gather from my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North, who has seen the operation, that that is the case. I have been talking about intermediate life nuclear wastes, which are not dumped in that way but are put in lined concrete trenches.

When speaking of unproven technology, it is important to consider with care the likely life of concrete. I am saying not that it will not last, but that, as yet, we cannot be confident that it will. That is one reason why other responsible countries—and 50 per cent. of Sweden's electricity comes from nuclear power—have chosen to go down different roads.

There is a certain illogicality about the arguments that are sometimes put forward about low level nuclear waste. We are told that the dumping will be done carefully. We are also told that it is not necessary to do it carefully because there is no great risk.

The French have at Centre de la Manche a repository for storing nuclear waste which I saw on a visit there with my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North and others. I was not deeply impressed by the approach of the French to the technology.

One reason for choosing Elstow is that it is on Oxford clay. The respository at Centre de la Manche is on shale. Oxford clay is supposed to be impervious, whereas shale clearly is not. Yet we are told that it is vital to use an area having Oxford clay. That is one of the illogicalities in the argument which supports my view of the unproven nature of the technology.

Mr. Skeet: My hon. and learned Friend is speaking of the integrity of cement. He will be aware that Pompeii has lasted until this day with all the bodies there preserved. In other words, volcanic ash plus water is a cement, and in that case it has lasted for well over 1,000 years.

Mr. Lyell: My hon. Friend gives a good example of an excellent preservative cement. Volcanic ash may be considered as one of the options. I do not want to be flippant, but my point about high alumina cement must have struck home. That cement, which was intended to be particularly strong and effective, crumbled within a few years. I am not suggesting that that will happen, but we are dealing with an unproven area.

On the same point, although I am changing direction slightly, the United States has used trench methods for the siting of short-life intermediate level nuclear waste of the kind that is to go to Elstow. The United States began by telling everybody that it was perfectly safe and that the radionuclides would stay within the perimeter of the site. However, those sites have been closed because it has been found that the radionuclides have migrated outside the site area at a far faster rate than was expected. Again, I hasten to say that I do not wish to raise alarm among the public. If my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment believes that that information

incorrect or that it should be put into another perspective, I am sure that he will tell the House. I go only so far as to say that this technology is unproven.

My third reason is that I believe it to be utter folly, from a management point of view, to transport such large quantities of low level nuclear waste all over the country, unless it is necessary. The fact is that 70 per cent. of all low level nuclear waste will come from Sellafield. What is the point of carrying it right across the country to Bedfordshire when, if mud rock clays are the answer—and Oxford clay is a mud rock clay — there are substantial mud rock clay areas, often deeper than those in Bedfordshire, much closer to Sellafield? I ask that that option should be looked at again carefully.

Other options should be explored in much greater detail. Our knowledge is still limited because this problem has come upon us fairly quickly in the last three years due to the closure of what was first thought to be the best option—dumping at sea. Therefore, I believe that we should have a period of dry storage on site, see how it works, and study the effects for another generation. There seem to be no technical difficulties about dry storage on site. I strongly suspect that the cost of such storage may be substantially lower. In this context, I take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North about each generation solving its own problems. By going unwisely for shallow land burial, although we may solve the problem for ourseves and for perhaps the next 50 years, I believe that, because we do not know whether there will be water seepage and an escape of radionuclides, we may be storing up a problem for future generations —a problem which my hon. Friend professes, and I know sincerely wishes, to avoid.

Another very important fact is that the Oxford clay on the Elstow site is in itself an important mineral resource. That site was originally owned by the London Brick Company. It was compulsorily purchased by the Royal Air Force before the war and then sold to the Central Electricity Generating Board with a view to its possible use as a power station. It was understood initially that the site would return to its original owners, the London Brick Company. It is exactly in the path of the environmentally preferred route for the exploitation of brick clay resources in the next generation. The London Brick Company, if environmental considerations played no part in the decision, would prefer to go to Houghton Conquest and then up to Elstow, but the county council has said that on sound environmental grounds it does not want it to go to Houghton Conquest. Therefore, the preferred route for exploiting Oxford clay for brick-making purposes, the largest and most important single industry in the county of Bedfordshire, is exactly where this site is to be placed —a very strong and independent reason for turning away from this site. The fact is that there are about 10,000 square miles of Oxford clay in the country.

Furthermore, the depth of clay at Elstow is somewhat suspect. During the past 18 months NIREX has published different estimates of the depth of clay that it requires. In its earlier pamphlets it said that it required up to 20 m of clay. It is now widely believed that over most of this site 20 m of usable Oxford clay are not to be found. NIREX seems to be changing its requirements. Therefore, we must look extremely carefully, on technical grounds, at whether Elstow would be the right site in any event.

I return to the key political problem—the strength of local opposition. It will be well known to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State that both the county council and the two district councils, north Bedfordshire and mid-Bedfordshire, are strongly against it. I hope that my hon. Friends in neighbouring constituencies will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to express their views on behalf of their constituents. A poll was carried out recently. One should not attach too much weight to opinion polls. Nevertheless, they give a broad indication of people's views. An opinion poll was carried out in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North. I am told that 93 per cent. of those who were asked—the poll was carried out throughout the constituency, not just in the areas that is nearest to Elstow—are opposed to it. The opinion poll also took into account the efforts made by NIREX.

That brings me to the "unwisdom" of the approach which has been hitherto been adopted. NIREX has spent about £250,000 on propaganda in order to try to persuade the people of Bedfordshire of the beneficial nature of its Elstow proposals. It says that there is nothing to fear from them. I am glad in one respect that NIREX is seeking to do so. However, I would prefer NIREX to indulge in a more open and careful examination of the problem than to use propaganda in an attempt to persuade. The opinion poll showed that of those who received the NIREX propaganda—over 70 or 80 per cent.—45 per cent. said that they were not influenced one way or the other, while 53 per cent. said that the material made them even more worried than they were before. One might say, "They would say that, wouldn't they?" Of those who received the propaganda, only 2 per cent. said that they had been a little comforted by the material. We are dealing with the feelings of people. That is the profound political problem with which we are faced.

On the planning inquiry commission procedure, the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 has never been used although it has been on the statute book for nearly 15 years. It was sensible to try to formulate a more comprehensive procedure. However, it stems from the days when we were absolutely wedded to the notion of great public inquiries, as though somehow they would solve rather than merely defer political decisions.

I should tell the House what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said when he had to consider using it. In 1978, in a statement, he said that he perceived the procedure to be defective. He took the view that the first, investigative, stage envisaged by the Act was bound to lead the commission to conclusions that arguments of policy and principle, as well as local issues, would also arise at the second stage of the local public inquiry, and that people would not feel that they would get a fair hearing. If people feel that they will not get a fair hearing, the principal purpose of having a major public inquiry will be defeated. The quotation which I took from footnotes to section 47 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 in the "Encyclopaedia of Planning Law" comes from a report at page 731 of the *Journal of Planning and Environment Law* in 1978.

I believe, therefore, that one should be cautious about choosing a planning inquiry commission per se. As my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government have made clear, a major public inquiry is certainly needed and will be held, but we should not necessarily be wedded to the notion of a planning inquiry commission.

NIREX has been spending a great deal of money on propaganda and there is always a little humour to be found

[Mr. Lyell]

in these matters. I am told that NIREX has produced a video tape showing a little man—perhaps one of my constituents or one of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North—settling down to write a letter opposing the NIREX proposals. The television set in the corner of the room suddenly starts speaking and telling him not to do that; it will be perfectly all right; it is all entirely safe. That is scarcely sensible propaganda. The only precedent for a television set to speak to people is to be found in the book "1984". That example gives some idea of the ineptitude of NIREX, which I appreciate has a very difficult job.

I was most grateful to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy in the Chamber at the beginning of the debate because basically this is a management problem for the Department of Energy. The technical questions should be under active and open debate and they should be ruled upon and investigated by the Secretary of State for Energy and his team. All hon. Members should have the opportunity to question the Department of Energy in detail about all the options. Parliamentary questions on this should not be transferred to the Secretary of State for the Environment, as now happens. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who takes such great trouble with these difficult questions, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would then not be in the embarrassing position of appearing to be judge and jury in their own cause.

That would lead us away from the present position in which NIREX—which, I accept, is not the Government—chooses a site and it is assumed that everything must go ahead. It would lead us away from the notion that NIREX should do nothing but plug the case for the site that it has chosen and it would lead us back to a proper and open debate about how to overcome this very serious problem. If we can get back to proper and open debate, I believe that solutions can be found. In those circumstances, I and my very rational constituents will put all our efforts into seeking sensible solutions to this national problem.

11.4 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It is interesting to follow an hon. Member in whose constituency it is proposed to locate nuclear waste. Geographically and temporally, nuclear waste disposal is on the horizon for my constituency. It is also novel to be the second Opposition Member and also the second alliance Member to be called. At one point, I noted that four alliance Members were present, while only the shadow Minister was here to fly the flag for the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) should be congratulated on raising this important subject. I apologise for missing the first few minutes of his speech, due to a delayed plane. The hon. Gentleman gave a very detailed exposition of the issues as he sees them.

We are all aware of the public anxiety that this issue generates. When I was a Euro candidate in the south of Scotland in 1979, the possibility of test boring for high-level radioactive waste disposal in the Galloway hills was an important issue. At that time, there were similar fears in the Cheviots. Subsequently, the same anxiety has arisen in Billingham and Elstow. In my area there are now fea about the possibility of under-seabed disposal at Storr Bank 16 miles west of my constituency.

In many respects, I believe that that public anxiety a scepticism are justified, because of the shortcomings Government policy and the arrogance of the nucle industry over many years. For far too long the indust acted in a paternalistic "trust us, we know best" mann and shrouded its activities in secrecy. In more rece times, there has been greater media and public interest environmental issues and the industry has come und increased scrutiny.

The nuclear industry often complains that opposition ill-informed or uninformed, but the industry itself mu carry the can for some of the lack of information, in vie of the secretive way in which it has sought to fob off t public with bland official assurances.

The tenth report of the Royal Commission environmental pollution captured the situation well paragraph 2.25, when it stated:

"Industry and pollution control authorities . . . must bewa of adopting a 'we know best' posture. They must recognise th the public's subjective judgment, and even 'gut reaction', ha an essential part to play. In a democracy it is an unhealthy si when authority claims omniscience and dismisses grass-roo concern as 'irrational'. On the other hand, a similarly intolera attitude on the part of the public and pressure groups is equal reprehensible if conditions exist for reasoned discussion."

Public confidence is not helped by bland assuranc which turn out to be wrong, as my hon. Friend the Memb for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) showed in h exposition of the history of the Windscale/Sellafie incidents. An environmental pressure group had to reve to the public the leaks that had occurred at the sit Government policy has also contributed to alarm an concern. In the late 1970s and in 1980 we were told by th Government that there was an urgent need to mak arrangements for the disposal of high-level toxic wast Then, at the end of 1981, we were told that it was n urgent at all and could certainly wait 50 years. What a the public expected to make of that?

Similar confusion has reigned in my constituency. have been assured several times by junior Ministers th under-seabed disposal is highly futuristic. When th Secretary of State made his statement in January c present disposal procedures, he replied to a question fro me that under-seabed disposal was many years away. O the same day, the media reported that desk studies we about to begin. The public simply do not know what make of all these apparent inconsistencies.

I assure the House and the Government that an proposal to deposit nuclear waste under the seabed off th coast of my constituency will be met with the same sc of hostile reception that greeted similar proposals Billingham and Bedfordshire. Even the perception th such things may happen can be equally damaging to m local industry, particularly as so much of it depends c marine activities. Colleagues and friends have already sa to me, "I see that they are going to dump nuclear was off your constituency." That is not the case, but the publ get that perception.

I should be reassured if the Minister would confirm th there are no proposals to dump waste or to do test drillin off my constituency. If there is a possibility of test drillin outwith the planning area, I hope that we shall be to something about what planning procedures will apply.

It follows from what I have said about secrecy that one prerequisite of any planning inquiry must be the fullest disclosure of information to the public in a form which can be understood by them. Commercial confidence often blocks the proper disclosure of information, but there are circumstances in which even that must be sacrificed if the public are to be confident that a proper environmental assessment is being undertaken before proposals go ahead.

The motion mentions the possibility of a planning inquiry commission, and serious thought should be given to that. It was put into planning legislation, but no Government yet have had the courage to activate such a body.

I understand that the Radioactive Waste Disposal Advisory Committee recommended that at least 10 sites should be nominated for the disposal of intermediate and low-level nuclear waste disposal and that there should then be a procedure to narrow down the number. At first, NIREX nominated two sites, one of which is not to go ahead, and we are told that five sites are still to be named. It would have been better to have the 10 sites named, and perhaps a planning inquiry commission would have been appropriate to consider the whole issue. When it became necessary to hold a planning inquiry on a particular proposal, the alternative sites would have been discussed and put out of the way and the inquiry could consider the merits of only the proposal before it.

There is anxiety about the fact that planning inquiries such as those at Sizewell and Windscale and the one in Ayrshire, at which I represented one of the groups of objectors, always produce an imbalance in the resources available to the two sides. The nuclear industry commands substantial resources. Mr. Justice Parker drew attention to that fact in his report on the Windscale inquiry. He said in paragraphs 8 and 9 of chapter XV that it was a matter of concern to him that there should be such a disparity.

I should like the Government to contemplate giving legal assistance to objectors, because, as Mr. Justice Parker said, it must be in the public interest that counter-arguments are fully examined. Perhaps objectors would have to impose some discipline on themselves to get together, and that might reduce the time taken by some inquiries.

Much has been said about the planning procedures for the disposal of waste. We have to ask whether there is yet a need to dispose of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste. Part of the trouble with NIREX is that it is comprised of representatives from the industry — the Central Electricity Generating Board, British Nuclear Fuels Limited, the Atomic Energy Authority, and the South of Scotland Electricity Board—who have a vested interest in disposing of waste, and perhaps they do not look at other options. It is regrettable that NIREX has such a membership.

The Flowers Commission recommended that there should be a nuclear waste disposal corporation with a remit to

"protect the environment, rather than offer the cheapest terms to BNFL, the electrical utilities and others who might require its services."

It is unfortunate that such a body was not established.

Storage must be seen as a possibility. It would give us more time to see what happens to materials. The industry will claim that it knows all about the material anyway, but many years ago we put asbestos into our homes and factories in the belief that we knew all about it and that it was safe. Storage gives us the option of continuing to monitor material to see whether factors which we cannot foresee at present may arise.

In many respects, NIREX is hamstrung by Government policy. The then Labour Government set out in their response to the Flowers report a list of measures which they regarded as important in dealing with radioactive waste management. The two points at the head of the list were that the creation of waste from the nuclear industry would be minimised and that waste management problems would be dealt with before any large nuclear programme was undertaken.

NIREX cannot manage properly unless it also has some control over the volume of waste generated. At present it is comprised of people who are generating the waste, so Government policy must come in and we must question whether there is a need to produce the volume of waste which comes principally from the reprocessing facility. Reprocessing is one of the major generators of waste and most of the intermediate waste that was scheduled to go to Billingham would have come from the reprocessing facility.

The present facility was started when there were fears of a uranium shortage, but those fears no longer exist. My right hon. and hon. Friends who were in the House at the time opposed the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Windscale. We were told that it was an urgent necessity, but it has still not been built. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) pioneered that project.

One of the economic arguments for the Windscale project was that it would be able to reprocess fuel from Japan. In recent weeks, I have visited Japan with the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), and we learnt that the Japanese are keen on developing a complete nuclear cycle, including a reprocessing facility. Therefore, one must question the economics of the Sellafield proposal.

There is a pollution risk from the discharge of a reprocessing facility and a risk of proliferation in the military sphere. That was why the Carter Administration banned any further reprocessing in the United States in 1977. Economically, reprocessing is at a disadvantage compared with dry storage. If we are to minimise waste, we must examine our attitude to reprocessing and question whether we really need a reprocessing facility in this country.

The Labour Government also said in response to the Flowers report that waste management problems would be dealt with before any large nuclear programme was undertaken, but my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South has already pointed out that this Government have no coherent energy policy. We do not know how many nuclear power stations they wish to build. I agree that the nuclear option must remain open. We cannot leave a hole in our energy supplies. Admittedly the programme that we are now talking about is not on the scale of the programme talked about by Governments in the 1970s. However, Torness is to go ahead in the next two or three years, and Sizewell is being promoted, though without any reference to the capacity need. Yet, while we are undertaking the commission of new nuclear power stations, we have not solved the waste management problems. The very fact of this debate today shows that the waste management problem has not been solved.

It is the responsibility of Members of Parliament and of the community at large to confront the problems posed

[Mr. James Wallace]

by nuclear waste. It exists, and even if it is stored for a length of time it will have to be disposed of at some stage. It is equally our responsibility to ensure that the problem is not unnecessarily magnified by continuing a reprocessing facility which I suggest is not absolutely necessary and by a continued expansion of the nuclear industry while the waste disposal problem remains unsolved.

11.20 am

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Like my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on winning the ballot, on his motion and on the debate that he has initiated. I was particularly attracted by that part of my hon. Friend's motion which talked of the need

"to adopt a satisfactory policy for the disposal of nuclear waste to ensure that people and the environment are protected from any hazards to which they may be exposed."

In my opinion, at this stage that is the most important part of the motion.

Before I comment on those words, I want to underline three or four topics which have come out in the debate. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) referred to the highly effective campaign in Billingham and the way that people in Billingham had kept within the law, showing that it was possible to mount successful campaigns against proposals to dump nuclear waste in a lawful way. Of course, in Bedfordshire we are quite used to such campaigns. We have twice had to mount tremendous campaigns to stop the third London airport being built on our doorstep. At all stages of those campaigns the law was observed and democratic processes were used, as they are being used now.

The second aspect of the debate that struck me is that public fears about nuclear waste will not be allayed by drowning them in scientific detail and enormous scientific research. We have this political worry. The hon. Member for Stockton, South said that people in Billingham felt almost as though a nuclear bomb was being put under their houses. But it is not only that that worries people. People get their news basically from television. It can present views in a highly articulate and neat manner, and people are well aware of the accidents that have occurred in other parts of the world—not only accidents involving nuclear waste but accidents involving general harmful substances. Those news items have registered loud and clear with people. That, too, has come across in the debate, and it underlines my argument that scientific detail cannot do it all.

I was intrigued by the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North about Pompeii and volcanic ash. I did not quite follow it because, as far as I know, there is no volcano in Bedfordshire. I do not know whether it was a fair comparison. It was probably a necessary light aside in what is an extremely serious debate.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire described what happened when judges were appointed to hold inquiries, and he asked whether we could solve the problem in that way. Unfortunately, we cannot. There is a great deal of reverence for the law in Britain. Indeed, there is a great deal of reverence, pe However, when Mr. Justice Roskill ruled that Cublin was ideal for the third London airport in 1971, I d think that he realised the political volcano that he ha off. I hope that we shall avoid thinking that, becaus have a judge or a panel of judges to rule on an iss important as the disposal of nuclear waste, some because the law is involved, the country will fall int and accept the decision that is reached. The blunt tr that it will not.

I also support those hon. Members who have sai this is not only a Department of the Environment m I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of Sta the Environment to the debate and thank him fo patience with which he has listened to us in Bedford not only about nuclear waste but about other matters are outside the terms of the motion. I also welcom hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for E because, like my hon. Friends, I take the view that very much a Department of Energy matter as well.

As I said earlier, the part of the motion that I w discuss is the part dealing with public worry. Wh store nuclear waste will always be controversial, should like to know what experience we have of deadly substances. Such information would necessarily allay public worry, but it would imm people's knowledge of these matters.

We read more and more about how we wer prepared for the last war, and it occurs to me that w quantities of poisonous gas and other substances could have been used in the war and were ready to b if Hitler's army had invaded or if Hitler had threate with chemical warfare. It is well known that we had of poisonous gas and other chemical substances. were they stored, for how long were they stored, there any accidents and what lessons were learned their storage? Are any of the sites used to store pois gas and other deadly substances suitable for the stor nuclear waste? I ask all those questions with the ob proviso that national security may prohibit an However, I do not believe that national security pr answers to all those questions, and answers to th some stage would be extremely useful.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South referred arguments between those who live in rural areas and who live in urban areas about where these subs should be stored. I believe that the bulk of the pois gas that we had to have ready in the last war was pr stored in a rural area. Any information about it wo useful.

Reference has been made to other countries in E and their attitudes to the disposal of nuclear waste. is the level of European co-operation? I understan other countries are embarking on long re programmes to see whether what is proposed at will do for them. Are we joining in that research? sort of contact do we have with those west Eu countries which are taking a long-term look at this If we are not actively involved, could we be? I thi we could be. If we are not, how long would it take ourselves involved in their research and what contr could we make?

The Elstow proposal obviously dominates the for Bedfordshire Members of Parliament who are today in large numbers. The green document "Radioactive Substances Act 1960" was produced

Department of the Environment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices in December 1984. I have picked out three topics which are being discussed in Bedfordshire and which are relevant to the debate and to future consideration.

Chapter 4 is headed "General Principles". Paragraph 1.c. says:

"a site must be selected where it is unlikely that future development of natural resources, or of the site, will disturb the facility."

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire answered that to some degree when he referred to the history of Elstow when the London Brick Company owned it, and to the use that could be made of the Oxford clay for the production of bricks. Bearing in mind the reference in paragraph 1.c. to the future development of natural resources, that instantly cuts across Elstow and begins to render it unsuitable.

Paragraph 1.c. then talks of development of the site disturbing the facility. On the site in question there is planning blight, but no one knows what use may be made of the site. We are constantly seeking ways of attracting more industry into Bedfordshire which will provide more jobs. Therefore, the second part of paragraph 1.c. is just as relevant as the future development of the clay for the necessary production of bricks.

At the bottom of page 23, part of the appendix on the environmental assessment, it says:

"Social considerations: likely effects on employment".

At the side of the page, under "Bodies to be consulted", it mentions the Department of Employment and the local planning authority. That is crucial to Bedfordshire, because the county has a big employment problem. Planning blight already exists and we must find ways of attracting more industry. However, the county has a limited amount of space available for attracting new firms and jobs and that leads me to my next point.

On page 24 one of the factors listed for consideration is the proximity of green belts. That gives rise to quite a tale in Bedfordshire. We have a sort of green belt policy. In its structure document, the county council went for low growth and now it is thinking about changing that. The balance between village and town, industry and agriculture is a narrow one in Bedfordshire. The county is fairly small in total acreage, but there is what is almost a green belt quite near to Elstow. Therefore, the local planning authority must be consulted. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire said, the district councils are opposed to Elstow and one reason for that is the future of green belts in Bedfordshire and the necessity to have a balance between town, industry and village and to recognise that not everybody who works in Bedfordshire can live there and not everybody who lives there can work there. We are interdependent on our next-door neighbours, but that interdependence and the seeking of the necessary balance has been somewhat upset by the present proposal on Elstow.

Those three points in the document published in December 1984 lead me on to two questions. What do Whitehall and Westminster see as Bedfordshire's role in what is basically an industrial country? When they have decided what they want Bedfordshire to do, can they say that sufficient help has been given to Bedfordshire to enable it to fulfil that role?

Although Whitehall and Westminster have not been as forthcoming as they might have been over the years, they see Bedfordshire's role as providing jobs in the manufacturing and high-tech industries while at the same time doing as much as it reasonably can to solve its housing problem, it being clearly understood and remembered that in the past Bedfordshire has made a big effort to help London with its overspill and housing problem. However, that is now over and London has so many empty spaces and houses that it is asking people to come back if they possibly can. Nevertheless, that does not undo what happened in the past.

Bedfordshire has been doing two things. It has been trying to find jobs and trying to solve its housing problems and those of London as it was compulsorily required to do in the 1950s and 1960s. One of our problems has been that we have not had the financial advantages of Government help that our next-door neighbours have had in housing and industry.

Milton Keynes has a brand new railway station, plenty of bypasses and a brand new bus station. An enormous amount of public money has gone into Milton Keynes to build it up to enable it to do what it is now successfully doing. On the other side of Bedfordshire is Stevenage. That has taken an enormous amount of London's overspill. It was earmarked as the place where London's housing problems would be solved and where jobs for Londoners would be provided. In order that Stevenage would fulfil that role it was given extra Government resources.

In between those two towns is Bedfordshire, without the financial back-up that those two towns have had. There has been a squeeze on the county. The problem now is simply that the second generation of London's overspill families in Bedfordshire are all trying to seek employment in the county or as near to the county as possible. Choosing Elstow as a nuclear waste dump will do nothing to help us solve that employment problem. In fact, it will hinder that. It will do two things. It will not help us in our search to get new industry into the county, and therefore will not help us with our employment problem. Nor will it help us with our housing. I have taken on board what has been said about what happens to housing, property values and possible housing development when an area has been chosen for a nuclear waste dump.

Bedfordshire is doing its level best to attract more industry and to build up its infrastructure by, for example, building more bypasses. Moreover, we take an enormous amount of London's waste into the brickfields. The hon. Member for Stockton, South talked about the transportation of dangerous goods and substances, and so on, and a lot of that is done in Bedfordshire. We are very much the crossroads county between the industrial midlands and the east coast ports and between the south-east and the north-west.

What Bedfordshire is trying to do to boost its employment prospects by getting more jobs will not be helped by the Elstow proposal. The three points that I have picked out of the 1984 document cut clean across Elstow as a possibility. Therefore, I hope that the proposal—Elstow is close to my constituency, a mere two miles from the parish of Cranfield—will not be proceeded with so that Bedfordshire can resume its normal course of doing its level best to provide better housing, more jobs and more industry.

11.36 am

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire,

[Dr. David Clark]

North (Mr. Skeet) on his success in the ballot which allows us to debate this vital and important matter today. It has been a well-informed debate on both sides of the House. The way in which hon. Members from Bedfordshire have rightly defended their county against something which they find undesirable is understandable. But, in a sense, that shows the dilemma in which any Government—I stress that—find themselves. I shall return to those points later, although it is obviously not up to me to prejudge the issue and no hon. Member has sought to do so.

There has been much interest and debate nationally. We have heard of the situation in the Orkneys. My hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) is here and I know that he is deeply concerned with the Cheviots, as I am. We have also had reference to the early drilling programmes in the Galloway hills. But the debate is also an international one. The disposal of nuclear waste is an international problem. I hope that the Government, while accepting our national obligations, will accept that we also have international obligations.

The motion mentions the miners' dispute. Naturally, with the scarcity of mines in Bedfordshire, that point has not been raised, but, representing a constituency in an area which still has coal mines I want to comment on it. We are debating the motion when we have had the longest coal strike in British history. One of the tragedies of that strike has been that, in a sense, its issues were never discussed. I remind the House that the strike was not about wages or conditions but about energy economics. That is what the motion refers to.

All energy is obtained at a cost. Nothing is free. Some costs are hidden and some are overt. The cost of producing coal was at the centre of the dispute. I have not mentioned this before in the House, but a student from Leeds sent me an article from an accountancy magazine. It was written by lecturers at Manchester business school, Sheffield university and Manchester university. Those eminent experts say that the NCB's accounts are "a mine of misinformation". The article states:

> "Careful scrutiny of NCB accounts produces the conclusion that they fail to form an adequate basis for informed management decisions."

That is an important point. The article demonstrates that it is not sufficient to look solely into the cost of mining coal. More costs than that are involved in producing energy. It is sometimes as well to remember that.

Some hon. Members may think that I am wrong, but I believe that there is a future for the coal industry. The motion refers to the percentage of electricity produced from nuclear sources, but I believe that coal has a very exciting future. I think that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) or the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said that we were an energy-rich nation. Consequently, we must not allow the coal industry to degenerate so that it forms only a minor component of energy production. Our coal industry has an exciting future if we can persuade the Government to press ahead with all sorts of environmentally-led techniques, such as fluidised bed combustion.

The main thrust of my argument is that all energy is produced at a cost. Projects such as the Morecambe bay barrage may seem cost-free, but there is a price to pay. There is not only the cost of construction but the effect on wildlife. I can imagine the letters that the Minister w receive if he had to follow that path, as he might ha do.

Hydro-electricity is clean and renewable and appa involves no cost. However, I have followed the deb Norway. That country has no nuclear power. Norwegians have to go way beyond the Arctic circ Spitzbergen, to mine their coal. They rely heavi hydro-electricity and the debates held there are now reflected in Scotland.

I was also interested in the scheme intended fo Talladale and Grundie rivers, near Loch Maree, in n west Scotland. The hydro-electric board wanted to a dam and to produce hydro-electricity, but that w have meant damaging some very sensitive environm areas. Therefore, there is always a cost. I am labo that point, because nuclear energy also has a cost must never forget the cost of disposing of and st nuclear waste. I do not think that that cost has been into account when considering the economics of nu energy.

The Labour party is not against nuclear energy believe that there is a balance to be struck. By presence here today, hon. Members have shown that are informed and interested in the subject. A very em scientist told me that no nuclear power plant could ju its existence in energy terms. He argued that the co producing that energy, of running that nuclear p station, and of decommissioning and storing the wast greater than the value of the amount of energy that it ever produce. I do not know whether that is right or w but we must bear that in mind. Nuclear waste h lifespan—or, as it is called, a half-life—that varies a few hours to billions of years. That must no forgotten.

There is a price to pay for everything, and we ultimately work out whether it is worth it. In a sense price is public confidence. That point was well argue the hon. Member for Stockton, South. The Secreta State has made no secret of it. On 24 January he m statement and said that it was important to maintain p confidence. Many people will share my view that p confidence has been greatly shaken during the past tw three years. British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. must a considerable responsibility for that. It is not only acci like that on Three Mile Island that worry people. I other things have happened over here—there have cover-ups, attempted cover-ups and denials.

I pay tribute to the work of Greenpeace, not beca disobeyed the court, but because it did that work i Irish sea and forced BNFL to take action. We very welcome the millions of pounds now being spen cleaning up the effluent. All power to Greenpeace's e in drawing that matter to our attention. But people about that in Cumbria, people who worked in Sella knew about it, but knowledge of it was suppressed b management of BNFL. Thus, we welcome open because we need it.

I think that we can all agree that it is best to keep level waste on site, and stored above ground level s an eye can be kept on it until we have the technica scientific knowledge to deal with it appropri Consequently, I should like to concentrate on low- waste.

I had a very interesting discussion with a Govern official of one of the Nordic countries. Of course

Nordic countries have a tendency to know the answers to everything, including nuclear problems. I asked him what was done with the radioactive material. He said that there was none. I pointed out that I thought that the Nordic countries had pretty good cancer hospitals. His face fell and he said, "Oh, I had not even thought about that." Of course he had not. The Nordic countries flush out the very low-level stuff into the sea and bury the rest on the land, in the way outlined to us by the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), and it is quite safe. Thus we have not only an energy problem, but a medical problem, although it is a very welcome one, in that many people have been cured and great hope is offered for the future.

As the Minister knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) has taken a particular interest in this subject. I have a copy of the *Western Mail* in front of me, dated Thursday 7 March. It says that 10 premises discharge radioactive waste into Swansea bay. I do not wish to create any alarm about that, because it is quite safe. However, I should like to refer to an oral question of 4 March 1985, which in turn refers to Singleton hospital.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gower has discovered that there is a process by which Amberlite IRA 410 resin is used to remove radio-iodine before discharge, but he has not been able to elicit from the Welsh Office how much research is being done on that process. It is inevitable and necessary that medical processes produce low-level waste, but the effects of radioactivity can be cumulative. If there are processes by which it can be removed it would be worth while developing them. I hope that the Government will investigate the question whether there is a viable way of removing very low-level radioactivity. I understand that the half-life may be only a matter of hours, but still, during that time, the waste can be dangerous.

My hon. Friend has told me about a letter that one of his constituents, a local authority worker, has received, advising him to keep out of the main sewer from the hospital to the bay on a day when radioactive material was to be flushed out. The material is dangerous for a time, even though the safety levels are not exceeded. I hope that the Government will step up research into the possibility of removing the radioactive qualities of materials.

I turn from the question of low-level material for medical use—a question which must be tackled even though there is no great danger—to the question of public confidence. We all accept that the planning procedure is one means by which we must try to allay public fears and ensure that what is done is done in the national interest. All Bedfordshire Members have discussed how that should be done. I believe that we must adopt a twin approach to assuaging public fears. There are the planning procedures, and there is Government action. I have already applied some brief strictures to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. I believe that that company has learned its lesson and now realises that it must be open.

I do not want to prejudge the Elstow proposals. I thought that the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire was somewhat unfair to the people of west Cumbria. I understand that at Drigg it is a matter of shallow clay trenches, but that the Elstow proposal is a duel proposal. One proposal is for a solution identical to that at Drigg. NIREX—I have the material here—states that one reason why it wants a site such as Elstow is that there will soon be over-capacity at Drigg. There is also a proposal to go slightly further and have higher-level intermediate waste that would be encased in concrete.

Mr. Skeet: No. The waste will be intermediate but it will be shorter-lived. The idea on Teesside was to cater for higher-level intermediate waste where the radiation would last for a long time.

Dr. Clark: I have not made myself clear. I was trying to compare Drigg with Elstow. The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North is quite right, and I shall discuss Billingham in a moment.

I am not trying to make a constituency point. I have no constituents in west Cumbria. I am simply trying to highlight a dilemma. There is over-capacity at Drigg. If it is safe for west Cumbria—I am talking about the clay, not the concrete—it must be safe for Bedfordshire. If it is not safe for Bedfordshire, we need speedy action in west Cumbria.

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Gentleman highlights one of the serious inconsistancies in the argument. If shallow trenches are perfectly safe at Drigg—I believe that the water just runs through them, and the material is in plastic bags—what is the point of transporting hundreds and thousands of cubic yards of material hundreds of miles across England to dump them in Bedfordshire? Why is there a need for Elstow clay? Why not just dig another trench at Drigg, or somewhere nearby? If it is not safe to do that, there is a good reason for our anxiety. Can the hon. Gentleman cast any light on that dilemma?

Dr. Clark: No, I cannot. The hon. and learned Gentleman and I are trying to elicit the same information. We are talking about the clay proposal, not about the concrete, which is a different matter. We need an answer from the Government. The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a logical point when he asks why the material should be transported. Perhaps Cumbria does not have the necessary facilities. Perhaps the material does not all come from Sellafield. Perhaps—terrible thought—some of it may even have to be transported through my constituency. We are in a dilemma; that is why we need information from the Government.

Mr. Lyell: I understand that 70 per cent. of the low-level nuclear waste comes from Sellafield and that the need to turn to somewhere other than Drigg is caused by crowding out at Sellafield. I hope that my hon. Friend will enlighten us on that point. If the material can be put in open shallow trenches, why should that not be done at or near Drigg?

Dr. Clark: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman and I have made it clear to the Minister what information we seek.

The evidence convinces me that the low-level, short-life intermediate waste is safe. However, much depends on the topography and the clay, and on soil science. That being so, I am sure that I speak for the Liberal party as well as for my hon. Friends when I say that it is sheer folly for the Government to reduce the amount of money made available to the soil survey by 50 per cent.

We need the experts to consider such matters. I do not know the answer. The hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire does not know the answer. If the Minister knows the answer, he knows it because he has been advised by the scientific experts. I know that the Minister

[Dr. Clark]

has a good minder at the Ministry of Agriculture—I saw him at work in Committee earlier this week. I hope that the Minister will try to persuade the Ministry of Agriculture of the importance of reconsidering that decision. It cannot make sense to reduce the amount of money made available for scientific research with a practical application. That is the sort of thing that shakes public confidence.

Similarly, there is the case of the Natural Environment Research Council. It is crazy of the Government to cut the grant to the NERC from £66 million in 1984-85 to £57 million in 1989. Such decisions weaken public confidence in the Government. There must be a scientific and technological answer to the problem. Even if we decommissioned every nuclear plant tomorrow, the problem would remain. Will the Minister please get that policy reversed? In January, the Secretary of State mentioned the work of the NERC in a project with HMS Discovery.

The NERC does long-term research, terrestrial and marine. Its work cannot be done by giving short-term contracts to universities or private consultant organisations. The NERC's record has proved its worth to all Governments, and it is reprehensible that the Government are cutting its funding.

As the Opposition spokesman on these matters, I recently had the opportunity to familiarise myself with the work of Merlewood research station at Grange-over-Sands. I had a long meeting with members of staff and the director, Mr. Jeffers, who told me about the exciting work that they are doing on, for example, control of bracken and, dare I mention it in front of the Minister, acid rain. One essential piece of research that they are doing, which is vital to this debate, is their monitoring of the aerial emissions from the Sellafield project. They are alone in that. It is a long-term study monitoring soil, grass and sheep droppings in that part of Cumbria. We are all seeking public confidence and public safety. I should like a categorical assurance from the Minister that no financial restrictions will stop that vital research project. If he is unable to give me that assurance, public confidence will be severely shaken.

I hope that NIREX has learned a lesson. The hon. Member for Stockton, South, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) and their colleagues fought a campaign which effectively persuaded the Government and NIREX to change their minds about Billingham. It was crass folly to contemplate putting higher-level intermediate waste under Billingham, as it would have been under an industrial area which also happens to be probably the most complex chemical industrial site in Britain. The proposal was stupid and has caused more damage to the credibility of the nuclear industry than almost anything else. I am aware that other countries are examining the possibility of storage under the sea and underground. The Swedes have a scheme for tunnelling out under the Baltic. I do not know whether they hope to be able to deal with Soviet submarines. I am not discounting the idea of storage, but it cannot be done under a major industrial complex.

Mr. Lyell: I cannot entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Was not the anhydrite mine frightfully good environmentally?

Dr. Clarke: The word "anhydrite" makes the point. It is dry. Westoe colliery in my constituency would not be used for storage because the water comes in far too quickly to make it useful. Scientifically, the choice was right, but we are dealing with more than a scientific matter. The public must have confidence. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said, rumours now abound, nowhere more so that in the north-east. The hon. Gentleman mentioned rumours in his constituency, but, within two weeks of the Billingham decision, I was told that one of NIREX's proposals was to dump off my constituency. I do not know whether that was a red herring, but it is a serious rumour that is causing great anxiety.

I have a long letter—I do not know whether I dare mention the name with the Minister here — from Brendan Quayle, the director of Community Service for Durham County. My hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) has also asked me to draw attention to alarm at the possibility of NIREX dumping nuclear waste in Weardale. Brendan Quayle wrote:

"The area is characterised by unstable rock formations and the former lead and fluorspar mines are liable to flooding and subsidence. In addition, the watercourses which penetrate these old mineral workings lead directly into the river Wear which flows through a number of highly populated urban areas, including Durham City and Wearside".

His mentioning unstable rock formations reminds me of the brouhaha about dumping high-level waste in Galloway and the Cheviots. An article in *The Times* yesterday says that a senior geologist in America has suddenly discovered that one of the three sites which were to be considered for nuclear waste is in an unstable rock formation. It is important that NIREX acts quickly and that the Minister takes the opportunity to answer my questions and dispel fears.

Dumping at sea seems, on the face of it, to be an attractive alternative. It is a case of out of sight, out of mind. As I represent many seamen, I might be more aware than some that it is not so attractive. I do not want to prejudge whether we should dump in the sea—it is a matter on which the experts should convince us. Disquiet was expressed in February 1973 at the conference in London on dumping. Other Governments, especially from countries around the North sea, such as Germany, Norway and Denmark, were worried about Britain's actions. I was pleased that the British Government were prepared to accept the pressure from our neighbours and to suspend dumping while the inquiry went ahead. We have since had the Holliday report, and it might be opportune for the Minister to comment on some of its recommendations today. That report recommends that dumping should not be resumed until current international reviews and the comparisons of sea dumping with land-based alternatives have been completed.

I am deeply worried about our becoming isolated from our neighbours on environmental matters. It happened on acid rain. We had a long and interesting debate on Tuesday about the Food and Environment Protection Bill, in which the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North participated. The figures show that we dump more material in the North sea than any of our neighbours. The figure I have, 98 per cent., was confirmed in chapter 4, paragraph 100, on page 109 of the Royal Commission report.

We have a different perspective of the North sea from our neighbours. We have fast rivers, assume that dumping is safe and think that the risk is minimal. We have strong tides, but our neighbours have not. The Federal Republic

of Germany has a completely different attitude from ours, as do most of our neighbours. Environmental isolation involves economic cost. I know that the Minister was not responsible for Tuesday's debate, so I draw his attention to the fact that the Swedish Prime Minister has already said that, unless Britain acts responsibly, in an environmental sense, economic action will have to be taken against us. I make that point only to urge the Government not to follow their course of dumping in the sea.

We are talking about material that is dumped on the surface of the seabed. Regarding the research work on canisters that are dumped on the seabed, not under the bed, has any work been undertaken to see whether those canisters can be retrieved? Similarly, would it be possible to retrieve barrels which have been dumped in various seas, if it were discovered that our scientists were wrong? It is amazing how scientists make mistakes as, indeed, we all do on occasions.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland may have touched on the proposal by Ensec to emplace torpoe-type canisters, into wells drilled in the seabed. We would use the technology of the oil and gas industries to do that. I do not wish to prejudge the issue, and I can see both advantages and disadvantages in doing that. As I understand it, capsules containing intermediate waste would be emplaced, and with the decommissioning of the old Magnox plant and other old facilities there will be an increasing problem. The wells into which the canisters are placed are sealed on top with concrete.

I have had brief discussions with the company, which assured me that it would be possible to retrieve those containers easily. Obviously that has certain attractions, but to do that, we need scientific evidence and the international co-operation of our neighbours. It would be folly to do that without them. I am not endorsing the scheme in any way, but seeking to explain it to the House, because it has not been explained as fully as it might have been. Is Government research being done to examine that interesting project?

The problem will not go away. I re-emphasise that even my right hon. and hon. Friends who are so green that they do not believe in nuclear power must face up to the problem. It is interesting that Sweden had a referendum and decided to phase out nuclear power by the year 2000 or 2010. However, it still faces the problem of what to do with the waste. Whatever party is in power, it will have to solve that problem. I have approached the debate in that spirit. I suggest to the Government that we have as much openness as possible, that together we try to build as much public confidence as possible, that we scotch as many rumours as possible and that we proceed with as much caution as possible, bearing in mind that waste and its management is a cost that must be borne in mind when we deal with nuclear energy.

12.14 pm

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): I have been sitting among a cluster of distinguished hon. Friends from Bedfordshire, but I cannot claim such a direct interest in the debate, as I come from Somerset, which has not received the same attention from the nuclear power industry, although in the past various sites near Somerset have been mooted as possible areas for waste disposal. We have two nuclear power stations at Hinkley Point near Bridgwater. I shall, therefore, speak generally to the motion.

Public misunderstanding on the issue is high. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) for instituting this debate, which I hope will dispel some of the misconceptions that surround the issue. I appreciate the presence of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment this morning. It is wrong for the Department of the Environment to be seen simply as sweeping up behind the nuclear power industry, when we need a co-ordinated approach between Government Departments, in order to get the right policy nationally.

Nuclear power has been overshadowed during the past year by the miners' dispute, although the dispute has brought home to the public the need and desirability for a diversified energy supply. The Sizewell inquiry also may have postponed some thinking about nuclear energy. We await eagerly the publication of the report. However, before then, it is necessary for us to pay continuing attention to how nuclear waste is to be dealt with. Whatever route we follow, nuclear waste will have to be managed and disposed of, and the long time lag between the decision and the implementation of it means that we must discuss these matters now rather than later.

Unfortunately, technology and politics collide in this issue, and technology does not come off best. Few hon. Members are technically equipped. I plead guilty to that, although I am an enthusiastic amateur and try to discuss science and technology as rationally as I can. I have noticed that people who are otherwise sane and sensible allow emotion and instinct to cloud their judgment on technical issues. However, the fault is not all theirs, because technicians frequently fail to understand the political dimension of, and to underestimate perfectly legitimate public anxiety about, some of their activities.

I have little to say to people who equate nuclear power with nuclear weapons. Recently I was on a trip to Japan and visited Hiroshima, which was the site of the first atomic bomb explosion, and a Japanese nuclear power station. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was an excellent companion on that trip. He will agree that it was reassuring to see that, although Japan has suffered from atom bombs, it is turning the same physics to safe and peaceful use.

For other people, the benefits of nuclear energy are plain to see but the risks are simply too great. It must be said immediately that they are right in one sense: no human activity is entirely free from risk. Life can never be completely safe. But we do not ban cars because many people are killed in them, and we do not stop building dams or flying in jet aeroplanes because catastrophes occur. The same is true of energy. There is no risk-free way of producing electricity or energy, and there is no means of doing so that is free of an environmental impact on the surrounding countryside and atmosphere.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) was right in saying that with energy production there are associated costs which must be taken into account. Indeed, the burning of coal is risky. It has to be mined, and that costs miners' lives. It has to be transported in bulk by road or by rail—chiefly by road now, I suppose. It has to be burnt, and that pumps carbon dioxide into the air. That gas is not itself polluting, but many scientists are concerned that the amount of carbon dioxide in the air has risen substantially in the past 40 years or so. That creates a greenhouse effect, which could be heating up the surface of the earth, with unpredictable consequences.

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

There is also the problem of acid rain, with a complex bundle of causes and effects, but it is certain that the emissions and exhausts from coal-fired power stations play a part and have a damaging effect on forests, lakes and rivers. The exact mechanism is unknown. It is perhaps a paradox that, although we have been burning fossil fuels for centuries, the chemistry of what happens, and its effect on the environment, has yet to be worked out.

I do not want to do to the coal industry what the enemies of nuclear power have done and spread general alarm and suspicion. I hope that we shall continue to burn substantial quantities of coal, and I believe that we should. However, I part company from the SDP spokesman, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), when he calls for an energy plan. It is not sensible to predict exactly what proportion of our electricity will be generated by the various means until we can see how the economics are evolving. For example, it was wrong to make predictions about future coal use until we saw how the coal dispute would end. I hope and think that, if we can achieve sensible economies in our coal industry, we should be able to remain substantially dependent upon coal for many years to come.

All electricity generation is accompanied by risks and drawbacks, and so it is with nuclear power. It is our job to identify those risks and to minimise them. Fortunately, a great deal is known about nuclear reactors, radiation and nuclear waste, even though the technology is still evolving. Radiation in particular is easy to detect, even in small dosages. That conflicts with public perception. The public think that radiation is difficult and mysterious, whereas it is emissions from coal-fired power stations which are more difficult to detect and control, and less is known about them.

I think that the public living near nuclear power stations have confidence in the technology, and that confidence is to some extent supported by responsible research. For example, in November last year, Somerset county council published a report entitled "Leukaemia in the West of Somerset", which is relevant to the debate, because that is where the two nuclear power stations at Hinkley Point are situated. In contrast to a number of other reports about leukaemia in other parts of the country, the tone of the report is sober. It goes into great detail, analysing medical statistics. It concludes that there is no special incidence of the various forms of leukaemia in the area of west Somerset, and certainly none that can be attributed to radiation emitted from Hinkley Point. But I am afraid that it is true that reports of that nature are not read by the public and are not picked up by the media.

The same is true of the report that followed the accident at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg in America. I dare say that if one were to ask a cross-section of the public in Britain what happened at Three Mile Island they would say that hundreds of people had been killed and that it was indeed a catastrophe. The fact is that no one died as a result of the accident at Three Mile Island, and the Kemeny report which was subsequently published showed conclusively that the surrounding residents were subjected to only a very slight increase in dosage.

Hon. Members may or may not know that most radioactivity to which they are subjected occurs naturally. About 80 per cent. comes from the atmosphere, from the food that we eat, the houses in which we live, and so on. The bulk of the remaining 20 per cent. comes chiefly fro medical sources, X-rays and so on, and only a tiny fractio can be attributed to emissions from power stations or fro the reprocessing of fuel. Therefore, a slight increase in th section has an almost negligible effect on the overa dosage that the public are receiving, and so it was aroun Three Mile Island, but that is not the public perception

There is a great gap between the knowledge of th experts and the knowledge of the public. I hope tha responsible commentators and people in the media wi realise how important it is to understand the issue and no to scare the public with sensational reporting an misunderstanding of statistics which are readily available

Apart from the nuclear power stations themselves, th management of nuclear waste coming out of them pose a special problem. As far as I am aware, the cost o management and disposal of such wastes is taken int account in assessing the economics of nuclear power. I believe that the hon. Member for South Shields wa mistaken in that respect. The figures that I have seen, comparing the costs of electricity generation, provide fo the disposal of nuclear wastes. It is still true that base-load electricity is cheaper to generate by nuclear means.

Dr. David Clark: I fail to see how that can be taken into account when we do not yet have a policy for the storage and disposal of the waste. That is what the debate is about today. There may be a very general estimate, but there cannot be anything like an effective cost evaluation, because we do not yet have a policy. We are trying to feel our way towards one. I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but I hope that he sees my point.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, but while he is right in saying that the details are unknown, even if exceedingly generous allowances are made for the subsequent costs of the disposal of nuclear waste, in most cases nuclear power is still slightly cheaper than alternative means of producing electricity.

Technology is still developing, and it is essential that the House maintains pressure on the regulatory authorities, BNFL and NIREX, to ensure that safety and public protection are given a higher priority than simple economy and convenience. If that does not happen, nuclear waste might become a burden on future generations. Like the coal pit at Aberfan, it might one day take revenge. That is why it is necessary to address ourselves, not just to the convenience and economy of the matter, but to safety for many generations to come.

There may be a breakthrough with fusion power. Fusion is a means of producing heat and energy through fusion, rather than fission, of atomic nuclei. Even if I fully understood the physics, I would not try to explain it, but such a power station would produce very little waste and have an almost inexhaustible supply of fuel. The engineering barriers to be overcome are formidable, and at the moment fusion remains a dream, although a dream worth pursuing. Research is going on not just in this country and other parts of Europe but in America, the Soviet Union and Japan. However, for the foreseeable future, we shall be operating conventional nuclear power stations from which waste is inevitable.

Low-level waste from nuclear power stations and from other sources such as hospitals may be disposed of by shallow burial, and that is relatively uncontroversial,

because the radioactivity is fairly shortlived. Of much greater concern is the intermediate and high-level waste, on which this debate has mainly focused. Such waste is produced from spent fuel coming out of power stations and from the reprocessing of that fuel. It is stored mostly in liquid form at Sellafield or existing power stations, and it is the aim to vitrify this liquid, which not only reduces its bulk but makes subsequent storage a great deal easier and safer.

I hope that we can move without too much delay towards the final disposal of radioactive waste and that we do not have a continuing policy of long-term storage. On this I differ from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, who was suggesting that long-term storage is preferable. Although storage is necessary for a time, while radioactivity decays and heat is lost, it creates difficulties of management and security. There is already a heavy enough responsibility on the management of Sellafield, without burdening it with the long-term storage of waste simply because we fail to provide disposal sites.

I do not want to go into the methods of long-term disposal. Most of them entail deep burial of one sort or another, and investigations are still proceeding. It can be done without long-term risk, but I do not wish to suggest, and it is not for me to propose, that Elstow in Bedfordshire is the right or suitable site. It is probably necessary to take account of population. Scientists and technicians may feel that the overriding priority is to find a safe site that is perfect from the technical point of view. As politicians, we must understand that people's concern, even if not strictly rational, must be taken into account. It may be necessary to site the long-term storage depots away from population centres, even if it is the second-best technical solution.

Waste disposal is inextricably bound up with the technology and the means by which we develop our nuclear industry. I shall touch on security and its association with our fast breeder reactor programme. Research into a fast breeder reactor is proceeding not only in this country but in many other countries, often in a collaborative programme. The fast breeder reactor uses, as part of its fuel, plutonium, and the operation of the reactor produces or breeds more plutonium, and this enables a more complete use of the uranium fuel. In other words, it is more economical. It allows us to be less dependent on outside supplies of uranium and it can use plutonium used in other reactors. A great deal of plutonium is already being stored at Sellafield, anticipating the commercial operation of a fast breeder reactor.

That may be well and good, but I am concerned because the increased use, transport and storage of plutonium raises questions of security. Plutonium is a highly poisonous substance and in the hands of terrorists could be extremely dangerous. It also has implications for nuclear weapons proliferation, because if fast breeder technology becomes generally available throughout the world, and can be bought by developing countries, it could become more difficult to control nuclear weapons proliferation because of the quantity of plutonium and the ease with which it could be acquired.

I may be exaggerating the danger, but the fast breeder programme may have a technological momentum which may be taking us down a path regardless of the merits of the case. Fast breeder reactors will always be more expensive to build and more complex to operate, and although they will use less fuel, there is, nevertheless, plenty of uranium in the world—reserves are enormous—and it is difficult to see that uranium shortage will ever be a constraint on our or anyone else's peaceful nuclear power programme.

Therefore, I have reservations about the fast breeder reactor, not about its safety or operation, but about its associated fuel cycle, and I hope that the prospect of a fast breeder reactor in commercial use is not in any way holding up our waste disposal programme.

Nuclear power can be managed safely and effectively. Mistakes have undoubtedly been made, particularly at Sellafield, but none of that underestimates my basic confidence and my hope that our continuing successful programme will not be held up through a political and institutional failure to provide disposal sites.

It is important that we move towards a satisfactory waste disposal route. It needs a lead from the Government, but above all it needs informed public debate, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North for giving us this opportunity to discuss the matter today.

12.37 pm

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I shall reiterate some points that have been made in the debate, especially those on behalf of Bedfordshire. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on bringing the matter to the House for discussion, and it has turned out to be an extremely informative debate. In particular, I thank my hon. Friends who represent Bedfordshire constituencies for their constructive speeches. They have clearly given the subject a great deal of thought.

This issue arouses strong feelings. The prospect of the establishment of inland sites into which low and intermediate-level radioactive waste may be disposed is the cause of considerable concern to residents of the areas under review. They have no means of telling whether the process will be safe. Inevitably, therefore, they prefer not to take any risks—a view which I understand and share.

I have every sympathy, however, with the Government, who are faced with the responsibility of deciding where the waste should go. It is not a choice that can be avoided, because we must face the problem. It will not go away. The Government have a duty to satisfy themselves and the nation that their decisions are as acceptable and safe as expert judgment can render them.

Reference has been made to short-term and long-term storage and disposal. Bearing in mind that we are thinking, not of three or four years, but of thousands of years in some respects, perhaps we ought to consider storage in the short term and ways in which the waste material can be retrieved. As such rapid progress is being made in science, I am convinced that eventually we shall find a solution to this problem. It is important that this material should not be put into the ground in such a way that it cannot be retrieved. Therefore, I have misgivings about the Elstow storage depot in Bedfordshire.

The view that that site is completely unsuitable is widely held throughout the county and it has been expressed by my hon. Friends this morning. We do not know whether the Elstow site is geologically safe. We do not know whether the clay belt is thick enough. In recent weeks there has been a great deal of confusion about that. We do not know exactly what safety measures will be

[Mr. Graham Bright]

required or what kinds of transport will be used. This material will be brought into the county from all over the country. There are great fears throughout the county about how it will be transported through the towns and villages of Bedfordshire. All these matters have still to be clarified.

The obvious way to clarify them is by means of a public inquiry. I understand that in October 1983 the Department of the Environment gave undertakings to Bedfordshire county council that such an inquiry would take place before NIREX began investigatory works at Elstow. The news that a special development order could be granted to permit NIREX to conduct its preliminary investigations, thereby cutting out a planning inquiry at this stage, came as a considerable shock. What concerns me is that, because no public inquiry is to be held, a great deal of propaganda and publicity is being put out by NIREX. A very good survey has been carried out during the last week by Anglia Television. It shows that people are more alarmed by the publicity material that they have received from NIREX than they were before they received it. It underlines the fact that a public inquiry and a debate on the issue should be held, rather than that we should merely rely——

Mr. Skeet: We have just finished the Sizewell inquiry, which lasted for 340 days. I do not suggest for one moment that this inquiry would last for so long, but will my hon. Friend say perfectly frankly that he would welcome such an inquiry, so that the nuclear waste issues can be fully discussed and the facts evinced?

Mr. Bright: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. I should greatly welcome such an opportunity. That is what I am asking for. There should be a public inquiry at an early stage. The decisions which seem already to have been made are not very helpful. They have disappointed Bedfordshire county council and the district councils. The people living in and around Elstow are afraid that their views will not be taken fully into account before a final decision on the establishment of a disposal site is taken. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has a chance to set their minds at rest. I hope that he will take up the challenge and do so.

Detailed tests are, of course, necessary to discover whether a site is suitable. Those who are in favour of this site must understand that they have to prove their case. Evidence must be made available for public scrutiny and be open to formal challenge. The voice of local residents, organisations, district and county councils and of the safety experts must be heard. Only then will an impartial assessment of the evidence and a decision that can be defended be possible.

My constituency is at the southernmost tip of Bedfordshire, and about 15 miles from the site. Nevertheless, there is widespread alarm at the prospect of nuclear waste, however low its radioactive level, being dumped in the county. By no stretch of the imagination can Bedfordshire be described as sparsely populated. Elstow is an urban area, and no amount of evidence or argument will satisfy the real fears of residents in that area.

I urge the Government to think again, especially about the way in which they are handling the planning and the opportunity for a public inquiry, because they are dealing with the fears and emotions of people and they should n rely on mere scientific theory, which is sometimes high questionable.

12.46 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I, too, congratula the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) o raising this important topic. I wish briefly to put the cas for the north-east of England, where there is deep anxiet about this problem.

It is an open secret that the CEGB is running around th Cheviots and the area of Druridge bay making the mos fiendish plans in the most surreptitious way for the futur use of land in that areas for the dumping of nuclear waste

Public confidence has been mentioned in several ver able speeches from both sides of the House. To me, public inquiry is a two-edged weapon. It provides semblance of fairness in that objections are heard, a senio judicial figure conducts the inquiry with great fairness an dignity and many days or weeks are spent hearing evidence and perusing proofs of evidence. I strongly suspect, however, that often it is no more than a charade because the Government have already made up their mind about the action to be taken. Two and half years ago, the Secretary of State for Energy—now Chancellor of the Exchequer—when he was contemplating setting up the Sizewell inquiry, said in reply to a parliamentary question from me that that inquiry was to be the first of several in various parts of the country where the Government wished to site pressurised water reactors. That reinforced the alarm in the north-east, especially in Northumberland, in view of the plans for a nuclear power station at Druridge bay, which is strongly opposed by all sensible public opinion in the area.

Half-way through the Sizewell inquiry, which lasted almost two years, the CEGB chairman, Sir Walter Marshall, publicly stated on television that the board was determined to have a nuclear power station at Sizewell, that the inquiry was merely a formality to give members of the public, objectors and pressure groups a reasonable opportunity to raise their objections and that he felt absolutely confident that the outcome would be permission for the board to build the power station. That is a totally unsatisfactory state of affairs. I suspect that public inquiries are used by the Secretary of State for the Environment as a sop to allay public anxiety by giving a semblance of fairness when the executive decision has already been made by the Government. Indeed, in law the Government are right, because a public inquiry leads to a report by an inspector—appointed by the Secretary of State—who simply makes recommendations which the Secretary of State may accept or reject. In certain cases, the inspector has the right to make the decision himself.

I do not share the confidence of many Members that a public inquiry allays the anxiety of the public. I suggest that such inquiries are often no more than window dressing or public relations exercises and that often the decision has already been made.

Mr. Skeet: The hon. Gentleman is talking about Sizewell, which concerned a PWR. The decision was simply whether to have it or not to have it. Naturally, a number of safety measures had to be examined.

How can the hon. Gentleman say that the Government have decided that there should be a nuclear waste repository at Elstow? There are three possible sites. They

have not been compared and no research has been done. The repository could be put at any one of those sites or at none of them. The Government cannot have made up their mind. Therefore, a public inquiry could not be a facade.

Mr. Ryman: I do not say that the Government have made a detailed decision. I suggest that they have made a decision in principle, with the details to be worked out later. I am not qualified to comment on the affairs of Bedfordshire, which is well represented in the debate.

However, I know that the informed opinion in Northumberland is that the Government are determined to have a nuclear power station at Druridge bay and to dump nuclear waste in the Cheviots. Little men from the CEGB were running around last summer and the one before drilling test holes and so on in the middle of the night. When we have asked the CEGB for information, we have been fobbed off with vague generalities and evasive answers, and ambiguous press statements have been issued.

There is no doubt that plans are afoot to build a nuclear power station at Druridge bay, which is strongly opposed by all sensible people in the north-east, and that there are carefully laid plans to dump nuclear waste in the Cheviots, which would be a monstrosity and is opposed by county and district councils and hon. Members of all political parties and by pressure groups representing, among others, residents and environmental societies.

We would not be satisfied with a public inquiry, because we know that the Government plan to site a power station at Druridge bay and to dump waste in the Cheviots. If the persistent rumours, based on tangible evidence and ambiguous denials by the CEGB, are wrong and the evidence is incorrect, I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will repudiate them. I hope that he will not fob off the House with a vague general statement. There is a mass of evidence that such plans are afoot and the Government are aware of the strong opposition to them in the north-east.

It is an insult to the intelligence of ordinary people for the Government to say, "Don't worry. Before we make a final decision we shall have a public inquiry, appoint an eminent lawyer as the inspector, have lots of experts, give the objectors funds to pay for legal representation and provide premises and proofs of evidence. You can talk for a year or two, because we have not made a decision." People know that in many cases the decision has already been made. The proof of the pudding is the arrogant utterances of the chairman of the CEGB. Not only during the Sizewell inquiry did he make these pronouncements. He has made press statements — there is one in the national press today—that he is fully confident that the Government will decide in favour of siting a nuclear power station there, whatever the inspector says in his report.

Many people were at the Sizewell inquiry for months on end. The general opinion is that it will be very difficult to persuade the Government not to site a nuclear power station there, no matter how strong the evidence against it.

The general impression amongst people taking part in that inquiry is that the decision had already been made and that the onus is upon those who oppose that decision to persuade the inspector and for the inspector to recommend to the Government that that decision should not be implemented. But that is putting it the wrong way round. The onus should not be on the objectors. The onus should be on the Central Electricity Generating Board to satisfy the inspector that there are good grounds consistent with public safety and energy and environmental needs to site a nuclear power station at Sizewell. That is my point, and I do not think that I can improve upon it by repeating it.

In this lengthy, comprehensive and elegantly worded motion, reference is made to the miners' dispute, and in that respect I must take issue with the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North. It is as plain as a pikestaff to anyone with the slightest knowledge of the industry that our future source of energy is coal. Although the Government have paid lip service to "Plan for Coal", they have decimated the coal industry and are in the process of closing pit after pit. That is what the coal miners' dispute was about. It was not about pay, conditions or productivity. The lengthy mining dispute has been about jobs, pits and communities. Anyone with only an elementary knowledge of the industry knows that there are rich coalfields to be mined in many parts of the country which can be made economically viable. It is only the asinine energy policy of this Government which has jeopardised again and again the successful mining operations of our coalfields.

It is a heavy responsibility on the Government that they have sought on narrow financial criteria to close pit after pit. In the north-east of England they have been engaged in a ferocious and unintelligent pit closure programme.

In my constituency, the National Coal Board invested some £2 million a couple of years ago in new pit props in the Plessey seam of Bates's colliery in Blyth, which employed 1,700 men. A year later, before the mining dispute started in March, the board engaged in negotiations with the National Union of Mineworkers because it wanted to close that seam in which it had invested £2 million the year before and make 800 miners redundant because, on further reflection, it had decided that it was an unwise investment, and that it had better cut its losses, close the seam and throw 800 men out of work.

That is the level of commercial judgment exercised by the National Coal Board management in the north-east of England. The board invests £2 million of taxpayers' money, and a year later it says, "Sorry, we made a mistake. We shall close the seam after all."

The National Coal Board is closing the seam and throwing those men out of work because it is part of the Tory Government's policy of pit closures in the north-east. It is difficult to close a big pit, such as Bates's colliery with 1,700 men. It is easy to close small pits, as it has done at Eccles and Dudley, throwing 500 and 600 men out of work. It is not possible to close a big pit straight away. Instead, through the National Coal Board, the Government make a big pit smaller by getting rid of half the men, and then they say in a couple of years that it is only a small pit and it will have to be closed. I mention that only as an example, because the miners' dispute is specifically referred to in the motion.

It is asinine for the Government on the one hand to murder the coal mining industry with indiscriminate pit closures based on the wrong criteria and on the other to exhort the country to switch to nuclear power and to deceive the public on the siting of nuclear power stations by the vehicle of a public inquiry.

The anxieties of the people of Northumberland have not been allayed at all by any of the fine speeches heard this morning. I hope that the Minister will, when he replies to the debate, give us some assurances on the Government's intentions in the north-east.

1 pm

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) for having initiated the debate on the disposal of nuclear waste and other matters. I want to turn my attention to the transportation of waste and the important question of soil survey.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) feels that they are all little men at the CEGB. Some of them are good and deep men, certainly in my part of the world. They are only carrying out their instructions and orders. In the south-west of England, where I come from, they carry out their task well, whether they are big or small.

We in the south-west are worried about the transportation of nuclear waste, particularly as we have the naval dockyard at Plymouth, and special trains run from Plymouth to the recycling plants or factories. Some people fear that there may be an accident, although I do not really share that fear. The system is pretty safe on the whole. The modern tests on the waste-carrying wagons seem to show that they are substantial and that the situation is under control.

For all that, there are fears. Will my hon. Friend the Minister assure us that in all such matters there will be the utmost vigilance and that the Government will constantly look at new techniques for the transportation of dangerous waste material? I hope that the Government will keep a close watch on those matters.

Fears cannot be dismissed. I well remember as a boy, during the early part of the war, the huge ammunition trains trundling through the west country up steep inclines. There was always the fear that they might come off the rails, resulting in a terrible explosion and tragedy. People must be reassured, and the Government must keep a close watch on that.

The soil survey is important. I share a little concern about what is happening in that area. The officers who are carrying out those tasks have come to see me in the House and to my Back-Bench agricultural committee, and they are worried about the cutbacks. A lot has already been done in soil surveying in Britain. A first-class job has been done and there is much information about our soils. The Government will continue with that work, perhaps on a reduced scale, but private enterprise should play a bigger role. If people wish to have the information, and if it is to their advantage, that they should help to pay for it, pound for pound, does not seem unreasonable.

I hope the Minister will reassure us on those two counts. I hope that the soil survey will continue, perhaps on a limited scale, and that every encouragement will be given to private enterprise and those who benefit to take part in financially aiding the survey.

We in the south-west of England are perhaps a legitimate target for the disposal of nuclear waste, because there are very old tin and other mines in Devon and Cornwall. They may seem suitable to some people for waste disposal, but I would be against that, because, although I am not an expert, I am not happy about nuclear waste being deposited in mines or on the land. I am very much in favour of disposing of it in the sea. Mention has already been made of drilling deep holes into the bowels of the earth, under the sea, and of putting in canisters. That would seem to be the right sort of place for it.

If it is safe to put this nuclear waste somewhere in th United Kingdom, it must be safe everywhere. I do not s that there can be any argument about that. The waste ca be disposed of on the land, below the land or anywhe else. If it is safe, it must be safe everywhere. But I am su that many people in the south-west are opposed to th waste being disposed of in Cornwall and Devon. It shoul be disposed of in the sea, in wells that can be drilled. W already have the techniques needed, because of oil.

Fears do exist. Fears may be expressed in Bedford, bu there are also fears in the south-west, particularly given th enormous number of holiday makers who support ou tourist industry. Nuclear waste and nuclear power are her to stay. We should not exaggerate the problems an difficulties, but should act responsibly. The press an those with vested interests should be careful about wha they say, and should not spread alarm, gloom and so on We should think very carefully about how we make an pronouncements on such matters. In my brief speech, hope that I have been careful not to alarm people in th south-west. Nevertheless, there is some fear. But we mus not exaggerate, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will help to put our minds at rest.

1.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): One of the central messages of the speeches during this debate is that there is a very real burden on hon. Members to explain the issues properly, without stirring up unnecessary trouble, and to lead as well as to represent.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) for introducing this debate and for allowing us the opportunity to hold an interesting and thoughtful debate on a multiplicity of different aspects to the problem. I pay tribute also to his expert knowledge. As a very junior hon. Member compared with him, I hope that I do not sound patronising if I say that I pay tribute to him too for the courage that he displays. He has not thrown over his well-known and often-stated allegiance to the nuclear industry, although in some senses the matter has become rather inconvenient at home. I do not in any way criticise anyone else, but I greatly respect the way in which my hon. Friend has led from the front in trying to find out the truth and to represent his constituents. He has also pointed out that there is a national interest too.

I once wasted some time studying academic logic, although it is of no help to anyone who wishes to become a Member of Parliament. There used to be a famous academic dilemma, and many gallons of ink were spent writing about it. It was called the prisoners' dilemma. It is a formal logical problem in which two separate decisions have to be taken by two separate people, and the best outcome for both can be achieved only if they work in conjunction. We face a similar problem. The interests of each constituency in the land, added together, do not necessarily produce a national outcome. In this matter, we have to represent the nation's interests as well as our own, and the tension between the two can cause problems for us.

There have been several things on which all those hon. Members who have spoken have agreed. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North and the hon. Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for South Shields

(Dr. Clark) and others have all agreed on the importance of openness. The present Government have patiently and doggedly tried to maintain the importance of and necessity for openness. I was grateful for the tributes paid to us in that respect by the hon. Member for Stockton, South. Openness can make the job of leadership even more difficult.

Without sounding too critical of one aspect of his speech, may I say that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland gave a good example of that when he said that he wanted me to lay to rest the rumours about the possibility of burying waste in the seabed off Orkney. He then said — as did my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordhsire (Mr. Lyell) — that we must be quite open in the discussion of options and consider every possibility. The trouble is that the more open one is about every tentative investigation, the more the rumours spread and the easier it is for people to get up scares and make rational discussion difficult. That is something that we have to face. It behoves us, therefore, to be very careful about how much currency we give to rumours.

For example, let us consider the Ensec proposal—the matter to which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland was, I think, indirectly referring. The hon. Member for South Shields referred to it directly. He told us that he had met representatives of Ensec, as I have done. As far as I know, the proposal is one that has been honourably advanced by a serious company with a good record in oil drilling and expertise. The company's geologists and engineers have suggested that there may be an application in the nuclear field for their expertise and equipment. I can answer the question asked by the hon. Member for South Shields by saying that the Department cannot make a judgment on the matter simply by looking at the brochures. We have therefore decided to look into it and to refer it to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee for assessment, and to include it among the options to be studied in consequence of the Holliday report.

At this point, those who feel that there is a danger that some decision will be taken in consequence, years ahead, which may involve changes in planning law, and even in international treaties — those who fear that they may have to cope with that situation—begin to try to block off that route. It is difficult rationally and openly to compare all the different routes without being driven back by the pressure groups which want to pick off one or other of the options.

That is a real dilemma for the Government. The Government are willing to take the flak that results from their openness. It is right that we should do so. However, we may sometimes have to tell people that we will not deny a rumour that a particular option is being considered. We will tell the truth. We will say that the investigation is at a very early stage, that nothing has been settled, that such a decision would involve various consequences, but that we will not wholly rule it out. Such an attitude may create some anxieties in the country, but if we take the easy way out and rule out all anxieties early on we may find that we have ruled out investigations of feasible options.

I accompanied my Secretary of State when he had that self-same discussion very recently with representatives of the TUC fuel and power committee. It is right that we should discuss such matters with the TUC. The general secretary of the National Union of Seamen said in regard to the Discovery and the Laird contract that he did not want us even to consider the possibility of dumping high-level waste on the seabed. He said that he did not want the ship to sail with the penetrators on board, never mind radioactivity. We are now engaged in a dialogue with him and it behoves us to convince him that, if there is to be validity in the scientific method, scientists must be allowed to assess things, even if only to rule them out. If we do not allow that, there will be no comparisons and no way in which to convince the constituents of my hon. Friends from Bedfordshire that we have examined everything. We had a friendly and constructive discussion with the TUC, and I hope that we shall make progress.

Dr. David Clark: Perhaps I might assist the Minister and the House. Can he make it clear that my understanding of the experiment is right? Is it intended to drop canisters on the seabed and then monitor how they react? May we have a categorical assurance that the canisters will not contain radioactive material?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for enabling me to put something useful on the record. "Canisters" is not quite the right word. The devices penetrate the sea bed, take samples, monitor local geological behaviour and assess the reaction of the devices. This is not a matter covered by the motion, but is part of a research project, aimed 50 years ahead, for high-level waste. Nevertheless, I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that no radioactivity is involved.

I shall speak only briefly about that part of the motion which concerns the electricity supply industry, because we have had some excellent speeches on energy. My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) made an interesting and powerful speech, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North, who is a great expert in these matters. I must disagree with the hon. Member for South Shields on whether nuclear power stations can justify themselves in economic terms. Whatever the origins of the dispute, every nuclear power station has justified itself, and more, in the past year.

I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for South Shields that we must ensure a bright and stable future for coal. Much of the anxiety and conflict of the past year has been about differing interpretations of how to reach that bright secure future. We have no less a commitment to it than have Opposition Members. We believe that what we are trying to do is more practical. Whatever fuel we use, we must pay full attention to the environmental impact of it.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North, will not mind my agreeing with the hon. Member for South Shields, who said that we must not forget the waste problem with nuclear power or, indeed, any energy source. Like others, he has pressed the Government to do more about acid rain. In effect, he is saying that we are not taking into account the environmental effects of coalburn and that we should charge more costs to coal because we are not using the polluter-pays principle properly.

That could equally be argued on the nuclear front. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland criticised NIREX for having an interest in the generation of waste, as if that were bad. That is a good institutional example of the polluter-pays principle. We can tell the nuclear industry

[Mr. Waldegrave]

that it is its job to make proposals and to pay for the proper disposal of its waste. That is what is meant by the polluter-pays principle.

That is a powerful and fundamental argument to show why it is right that the executive agency, which bears the costs of disposing of the waste from the nuclear industry, should be part of the industry. The responsibilities should fall on the partners of that industry. It would be wrong to make taxpayers bear that responsibility in the form of a statutory corporation. The interests of taxpayers, of the community and of safety must be met in other ways, through the controls that we place on the executive agency. It is essential that the executive agency should be linked to the industry, because that is an institutional representation of the vital polluter-pays principle.

Mr. Wallace: I wish to ask the Minister, not about that point, but about the previous point. He rightly stated, and the debate has displayed, the links between any fuel policy that we follow and the environmental implications of it. That has been illustrated in many ways. Can the Minister give any hope of a resuscitation of the Commission on Energy and Environment, as recommended by the tenth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution?

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot give any hope of that. I wish to seek the indulgence of the House on a matter. I have calculated that I have 78 questions to answer. If new questions come faster than I answer the original questions, we shall get into an infinite regress. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) has the next debate, to which I shall also reply, and I do not want to waste the speech that I have prepared for it. The punishment for having been up until 6 o'clock this morning at the Council of Ministers in Brussels is to return to find that one has not one but two debates to reply to. When one goes away, one volunteers for work, as hon. Members well know.

It may be helpful if I briefly outline the present position. An overall strategy was described in the White Paper, "Radioactive Waste Management", which was published by the Government in 1982. My Department is responsible for ensuring that a long-term national strategy is developed and implemented, in conjunction with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. Several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire, suggested that the Government should reconsider whether the division between the Departments is right, and whether we worry people by making it appear that we are judge and jury in our own case. There is no fundamental difference between the role of the Secretary of State as the ultimate appellate authority on planning and the Department's responsibilities for housing or any other land use.

It is important to recognise that the Secretary of State for the Environment has a vital dual role in a range of different activities. He is responsible for house building and for speeding the provision of houses. He is also responsible for structural plans, which in some cases may not go in the same direction and, above all, for the appellate authority at the top of the planning system.

Mr. Lyell: With respect, my hon. Friend is not responsible for energy policy. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy is the junior Minister responsible for that. While it was skilful to gi example of dual responsibility, nuclear energy is no a case.

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly would not claim th right hon. Friend has a responsibility for energy pol was saying that there is nothing necessarily illogic suspect in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of having a particular function—in this case the dispo waste — along with his planning functions. He originally given the responsibility, quite explicitly, f disposal of waste jointly with the Secretary of Stat Energy, but with himself in the lead. That was in resp to the Flowers report, as an attempt to ensure that p did not think that it was all sewn up by the energy indu It was an honourable attempt to do that. If it is not ha that effect we shall consider it again, but the ori arguments were quite strong and should not underestimated.

We are also, therefore, responsible for the rigo control of the disposal of nuclear waste to protect public and the environment from any hazards. For purpose we are advised by Her Majesty's Radiochem Inspectorate. I am glad to use that term for the first in this House. The inspectorate has only recently given that title. It deserves it, because it is a strong formidable part of my Department. In many cases responsibility is a joint one with my right hon. Friend Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The nuclear and electricity generating industries h executive and financial responsibility, as I have said, I argue that that is right as an embodiment of the pollu pays principle. I shall try to simplify what is a complica picture, because nuclear wastes vary considerably in t characteristics and therefore in their most appropr method of management.

By far the largest part of the radioactivity is contai in small volumes of heat generating waste which come the first place from the reprocessing of spent reactor fu The policy is to store them in solid form for at least years. I have to tell the hon. Member for Orkney a Shetland that if we were to close down the whole of nuclear industry, including the reprocessing side, would still have an urgent need for a lower a intermediate-level disposal site. Therefore, in terms of difficult decisions that face us, we have no rabbit hole go down; the problem will remain with us.

The policy is to store high-level waste in solid form at least 50 years at Sellafield and Dounreay until the r of heat generation has been substantially reduced natural processes. NIREX is not, therefore, concern with them. With low and intermediate-level waste there no similar advantage from delay. That is why work h proceeded on developing two types of disposal facility such wastes—one deep underground and the other ne the surface.

If I understand my hon. Friend the Member f Bedfordshire, North correctly, he is not so much disputi the content of the strategy as emphasising that there mu be full opportunity for public discussion of such matter I think that that was the main theme and burden of h speech. He was concerned with the technological optio available and the potential sites for such facilities. I assu him once again, as I did at the beginning of my speech that the Government are in absolute agreement with th objective.

I have to say that we do not agree with my hon. Friend about the particular planning route by which to reach a planning inquiry commission, and I shall explain why, but I should like first to say a brief word about the public discussion of the technological options.

The technology was comprehensively reviewed in the Flowers report on "Nuclear Power and the Environment", the sixth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, which was published in 1976. One of the recommendations of that report was the creation of a committee to give Ministers the best possible advice on broad issues of policy. As a result, the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee was appointed in 1978. It has had two exceedingly distinguished chairmen: first, Sir Denys Wilkinson, FRS, and, since the beginning of last year, Professor Paul Matthews, FRS, former vice-chancellor of Bath university. The chairman and a majority of the members are independent, and they include trade unionists. For the first time, recently we appointed a trade unionist from outside the industry to join those from inside. The committee contains members from the industry, both management and unions. The committee has provided important advice, which formed the basis of the 1982 White Paper.

What is especially relevant to the debate is that that advice has been set out clearly and publicly in five published reports. They have made more information about radioactive waste more widely available to the public than ever before. The hon. Member for Stockton, South rightly said that there was a certain oddity, in that we concentrate so much on those matters in the nuclear industry. Perhaps we do so because of the information that is so much more widely and easily available than the information about many other exceedingly dangerous and, in some cases—particularly dioxins—equally persistent substances which are not radioactive. That is a paradox. I am not trying to get away from my commitment to make all this information available.

That is only one part of the story. My Department has deliberately adopted the approach of making available the fullest possible information about waste management. In addition to the statistics about the discharge of radioactivity into the environment, there are reports on scores of individual, Department of the Environment funded, research projects in this sector which are freely available in the National Lending Library. There are annual progress reports on the research programme as a whole, and I could, although I shall not, as I see my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham looking at his notes, list the many other publications in this sector from both my Department and other bodies.

All that research and advice can be regarded as contributing to finding what is often called the best practicable environmental option for this type of waste. None the less, my Department is now engaged in a formal study covering all disposal and storage options. I repeat, for the benefit of the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland and for South Shields, who are interested in this, that we are covering all disposal and storage options at sea or on land to draw the threads together and to establish the best practicable environmental options on a comparative basis.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North said, this work stems from the important and excellent review by Professor Fred Holliday and his team on the disposal of low-level wastes in the north-east Atlantic. That report was jointly commissioned by the Government and the TUC and has been accepted by both. The detailed analysis now being carried out will be completed before the end of the year and will result in a published report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North mentioned sea dumping. The most striking thing about the Holliday report is the thorough endorsement that it gives to the science of the past. That independent committee, with a well-known and sceptical environmentalist, who I argued strongly should be on the committee if it should have the validity that it sought, has given a clean bill of health to the science of the past. There has been no detectable damage to the environment of the north Atlantic, let alone to people.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked about the retrievability of the drums put into the sea. The irony is that, although some have been retrieved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as part of the research programme, if we want to do that, the drums cannot be found unless we deliberately fix radio transmitters to them. The radioactivity in them is not detectable and that gives some sign of the safety margins in that process.

Dr. David Clark: The main recommendation of the Holliday report was that there should be no further dumping at sea until there was an international agreement to do that. Is that the Government's policy?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The Government accepted all the recommendations of the Holliday report. That recommendation is not based on any doubts about the science of the past but is about the wider context of sea dumping.

When we are discussing technological options, we have to be aware that the Select Committee on the Environment, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), has recently embarked on a thorough study of the subject. My Department and other Departments are co-operating fully on the study, and we shall await its conclusions with interest. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has undertaken that we shall not reach final conclusions, following our review of options, until the Select Committee's report is available in the latter part of this year. I hope that I have said enough to convince my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North that extensive public discussion of general policy has not only taken place but will continue to take place.

There are specific proposals for new disposal facilities and opportunities for discussion on them. Any proposal such as this will be judged against principles for the protection of the human environment, which were published in January by the authorising Departments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North asked for reassurance that, when a site was filled and completed, there would be no radioactivity over the perimeter of the site. That will be the case while the site is a working nuclear site, as it were, and under the control of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, and so on, when the margins of error would be of the order set out in the assessment principles, which my hon. Friend has studied and which, he will agree, are low even in terms of the nuclear industry.

The principles to which I referred are the result of wide consultation. They were published as a consultation paper in October 1983, and 117 organisations and individuals

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responded to the invitation to comment. A summary of their comments, together with the responses of the authorising Departments, is also available in a report on the consultation exercise, which is in the Library.

The assessment principles relate primarily to the authorisation of a facility under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Planning permission is required, and the Government have said that the necessary regulations will be made so that the facility will be licensed during its operational life by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

That is an impressive range of safeguards for the public for now and for future generations. We have undertaken that any such applications will be the subject of a public inquiry under an outside inspector, and we have said that NIREX will be required to prepare a detailed environmental assessment of any proposal.

I am glad to say that at about 4.30 this morning, in the European Council of Environment Ministers, after eight years the Danes withdrew their constitutional objection to having a directive on environmental impact assessments, so that will now become Community law. We had already said that we would do it voluntarily.

That means that NIREX will be required to prepare a detailed comparison of other sites. But we have gone even further than that. In response to widespread feeling—and in response to what was urged on me by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire; I hope that I am meeting one of his concerns—we thought that it would be wrong for only one site to be considered.

I must rebut strongly the allegations—I cannot call them anything less than that — made by the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman), who unfortunately is not in his place, about the behaviour of the Secretary of State. The hon. Member, as a barrister, should know that he must be careful when accusing the Secretary of State for the Environment of having a closed mind on planning applications. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he can show that my right hon. Friend has made up his mind about planning applications before they are even put in, under the Wednesbury rules my right hon. Friend is challengeable and is open to having his decisions reversed. The hon. Gentleman said that people did not have confidence in the planning system. I thought as he was talking that that was exactly the way to undermine confidence in the system. He made an unfortunate speech for a distinguished and senior lawyer.

I have discussed the assessment principles. In addition to those, we have the environmental impact assessment and a comparison of sites. We took the view—here I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright)—that to subject the inhabitants of wherever it may be—Elstow may be on the short list; three or four may be on the list—to long planning inquiries one after another would be a nightmare.

The inspector at the first inquiry might try to confine matters simply to drilling and investigations, but he would find it difficult to do that. There would be the prospect, if there were two inquiries end to end, of three or four years of such hardship—if Sizewell is anything to judge by — when people would be subjected to great uncertainty and distress.

The special development order procedure allows information to be gathered so that comparisons may be made. Parliament can then debate the matter, a an essential part of the public discussion of t issue. That is a sensible procedure, and I think t the support of hon. Members in saying that.

I said that I would refer briefly to the reason Government do not propose to have a plannin commission. My very well briefed hon. and learn the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire has already some of the arguments, so I can pass over th quickly. All I can correct him on is that the inquiry commission procedure goes back to 19 repeated in the 1971 Act.

The basic problem to which my hon. and learn referred, which previous Ministers in the Depa the Environment could probably confirm—and and learned Friend quoted a previous Labour Sec State on the matter — is that we do not allegedly general decisions taken in the first p planning inquiry could be considered as having c mind of the inspector in the second part of the i

A fundamental problem about the planning commission route is that it has never been used. a difficult and controversial matter as this, I beli it would be dangerous to use it for the first time occasion. However, the issues have already been are being discussed by the Royal Commissi Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Commi a Select Committee of this House. Therefore, I believe that the planning inquiry commission has add. I fear that the single public inquiry, whic compare the short-listed sites, would be a long However, it would not be quite so lengthy as two i held one after the other.

I shall now deal with some of the many questi have been raised. I can say to my hon. Friend the M for Bedfordshire, North that the Atomic Energy A is doing a great deal of work on packaging tech research into containers and the reliability of co That work will be continued. Some of it is funded Department and some by the industry.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South paid tri the campaign in Billingham. I believe that my hon. the Member for Bedfordshire, North said that in environmental terms that was probably the ideal However, we had to take into account the fact t owner of the site did not wish to co-operate. As one hon. Friends said, that would have involved prolonged and difficult compulsory purchase pro and, just as with the two inquiries, a long per uncertainty and distress for the region. Therefore, i not be tolerated.

I join the hon. Member for Stockton, South in tribute to the way in which the campaign was cond I met the campaigners the day after the Brighton bor It was a fraught day. I remember that I travelled w unusually large number of special branch officer came across many chanting people who were stand the side of the road. I said to the special branch of "What about this lot? Are they fierce?" "No", he "they are not fierce at all." So we stopped the c spoke to them. They showed me the utmost courtesy is the way to conduct matters in a free country.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South men people's fears. I have already briefly referred t problem. As the hon. Member said, politicians ha recognise people's fears, and we do. However, whe

fears are groundless, we have to try to still them. We are not doing our job if we represent only the fears. We have to try to sort out the justified and the unjustified fears.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire said that only land in public ownership should be used. In the search for sites, those which are not in public ownership will not be automatically ruled out. However, my hon. and learned Friend made the fair point during the discussion on Billingham that one can land oneself in very prolonged and difficult procedures. However, if no site in public ownership can be found anywhere, we shall have to think again. Wherever it is, the site must be safe. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), who represents a constituency in a less densely populated part of the country. If it is safe anywhere, it must be safe everywhere. There may be only a few dairy farmers in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), but proper care must be taken for their safety as much as for anyone else's safety.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire referred to the depth of clay and the overriding national interest, as it were, in the supply of clay. That is the type of issue that should be discussed at a public inquiry in the first instance and I know that my hon. Friend will not seek to tempt me into pre-empting its decisions.

My hon. and learned Friend and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland both mentioned storage. There is bound to be a good deal more storage because of the slow process of all this. The BPEO study will be considering medium-term storage. All storage is medium term, although other countries are investigating storage followed by long-term disposal. We shall try to assess storage options alongside other options.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire asked why NIREX had chosen impervious clay when the French had chosen permeable shale. The answer is that we have a better site than they have, although the defence for their choice is that the drainage water from the site goes into the sea and is diluted, so that there is no serious worry. Prima facie, however, an impermeable site seems much better.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to the arrogance of the nuclear industry. When I worked in industry I was in a factory which, although not associated with the nuclear industry, was on the same site as part of the National Nuclear Corporation. We should perhaps be careful when talking about people who have worked for many years in an industry which until very recently received great public support and praise. The magnificent official history of the Atomic Energy Authority shows the almost saintly position of the early nuclear power programme and the euphoria surrounding it. In those days Professor Quatermass doing secret things behind a high fence was our idea of a hero of society. That was certainly silly, but it would be equally silly now to cast the nuclear industry in the role of the source of all evil.

I, too, do not envy NIREX. It is easy to blame the messenger when one does not like the message. We should not blame the people involved. I do not seek to defend everything that NIREX has done, but it has an inherently difficult task and one must have some sympathy for it.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made an interesting and thought-provoking speech and I am sorry to have to criticise it. He said that we should not be reprocessing because it would lead to proliferation. I believe that exactly the opposite is true. The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed, but we have already proliferated. We are a nuclear weapons state, so reprocessing here will not lead to proliferation. If we encourage other countries to have reprocessing facilities the ability to produce enriched uranium will become more widespread. There is thus a strong case for encouraging those without such facilities to have their reprocessing done here.

I have dealt briefly with emplacement in the sea because My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) apologised for having to leave early for an important constituency engagement. He asked about future disturbance and the social considerations with which the planning inquiry will have to deal. That is the proper place to deal with them. He also asked an intriguing question about where poison gas was stored during and after the last war. I fear that such storage places will not necessarily be relevant to the storage of radioactive waste. Nevertheless, I will look into the matter and write to my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for South Shields said, engagingly, that he did not understand the meaning of the phrase "half life". I shall have a shot at explaining it to him, which is dangerous because I am in front of an expert. As I remember, this is an asymptotic curve and one can measure the time that it takes for half the energy to be dissipated from a substance, but, as the curve meets the X axis at infinity, one cannot say when it will all have disappeared. Therefore, one measures half the dissipation.

The hon. Member for South Shields rightly said that medical waste also has to be disposed of. He asked a question about Singleton hospital and its waste. I shall write to him on that detailed matter.

Important points were made about Drigg and its relationship to Elstow. It is the intention that Drigg should be reserved in future for Sellafield waste. As soon as another facility is available, other waste will go there. As my right hon. Friend said on 24 January, the new facility will probably consist of concrete-lined trenches up to 60 ft deep, covered by a thick layer of concrete and an amount of earth. That is the concept that we are dealing with, at least in the early stages. Drigg is perfectly satisfactory, but the new facility will be significantly better than Drigg.

The answer to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire is that much of the waste currently going to Drigg comes from Sellafield. That will continue, but the pressure on Drigg will be relieved by the new facility which will take waste from elsewhere.

Mr. Lyell: I had understood that 70 per cent. of all the low-level waste came from Sellafield and that it was proposed to send much of that to Bedfordshire. Is that correct?

Mr. Waldegrave: I will write to my hon. and learned Friend, but I understand that all the Sellafield waste will go to Drigg and that Elstow would take waste from elsewhere.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked a direct and important question about the funding for work on radioactivity at Merlewood and he said that that work, which deals with, among other things, gaseous emissions from Sellafield and is of great importance to my

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Department, might be affected by the reorganisation within the NERC. He asked what would happen to that work. As it is directly funded by my Department, I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that it will continue.

I have dealt with the questions of the hon. Member for South Shields about the retrievability of drums on the seabed. I pay tribute to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wells, who spoke about the nuclear industry as a whole. As he said, the fast breeder reactor can be a useful eater of waste. One can either breed plutonium for it or tune it to eat plutonium or enriched uranium. In certain circumstances, the fast breeder reactor can make a useful contribution to a waste disposal strategy.

I have made some brief and critical comments about the speech of the hon. Member for Blyth Valley. It is important that, for the sake of the constituents of the Bedfordshire Members who are here in such force, I should stress that no secret decision has been taken and that nobody's mind is closed. These matters of intense importance will be considered with all the rigour and analytical power available to the Government. That means that people will hear more than they ever wanted to hear about the pros and cons of various aspects of the nuclear industry.

I fear that people will also be subjected to all sorts of scares from people who wish the nuclear industry ill, including a small minority among them who wish our country ill. We must be realistic about the motives of some people. The great majority are genuinely concerned, but there are wreckers about. I promise the public that no decision has been made and no secret conspiracies are involved in this matter. I can give them one important assurance. If there were any secret conspiracy, I am sure that hon. Members who have attended this debate in such force would soon find out, and I do not think that it would be worth any Minister trying it on.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West and the hon. Member for South Shields asked about the soil survey. It was set up to conduct its great project, which is getting towards completion. That of course is why my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose responsibility it is, has had to take the rather harsh decision to limit the resources for it. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West pointed out, if people argue that it is an essential input into decisions in the nuclear industry, for example, it behoves that industry to put its money where its mouth is and to place contracts with the soil survey, which it is free to do.

We have had a very useful, responsible and thoughtful debate, which I hope will have made some contribution to the process of public consultation to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North rightly attaches such importance. We shall hear much more of this subject over the coming years, and I hope that all our debates are of the same high quality as this one has been.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, while congratulating the electricity supply industry on the production of some 18 per cent. of its power from nuclear sources as compared with 48 per cent. in France, and recognising the need following the miners' dispute to have a diversity of fuels available for the manufacture of electricity in the United Kingdom, acknowledges the need to adopt a satisfactory policy for the disposal of nuclear waste to ensure that people and the environment are protected from any hazards to which they may be exposed; expresses the need to hold a full and comprehensive inquiry into the siting of such repositories and into the several options technology has made available to the industry in such a manner that the public may participate and be fully informed of all relevant facts; and asks the Government to consider the prospect of employing the planning machinery contained in sections 47 to 49 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 relating to a planning inquiry commission.

Private Rented Accommodation

1.56 pm

Mr. Peter Hordern (Horsham): I beg to move,

That the Rent Acts be repealed.

In some respects the housing market is working admirably. I refer, of course, to the large number of people who now either own their homes or are in the process of buying them both directly in the private sector and in the public sector by virtue of the right-to-buy legislation carried through by the Government.

However, it has to be said that while that sector of the market has been performing and growing admirably, the other sector, which is the amount of housing stock available for rent, has been under great pressure. I refer especially to that part represented by the private rental market.

The consequences of the decline in the number of houses and flats available for rent has been that there is a severe shortage for young people starting out in life and looking for somewhere to live. There is also a marked shortage for people wanting to move from one place to another, for the very eldery and, most acutely, for the very poor.

It was not always the case. As long ago as 1914, the number of tenancies in private hands amounted to 95 per cent. of the total. Rents were frozen in 1915, and that was when the long decline in the proportion of accommodation available for rent really began. Rents were frozen in 1915 for reasons which must have appeared very good at the time. Rents were rising fast, and those who had to put up with those rising rents were finding life very difficult. In the circumstances at the time, the freezing of rents must have made a lot of sense, but I do not think that those circumstances can be said to apply today.

In other countries, so far from there being a majority of houses owned in the private sector, there is a majority of rented accommodation. There are 9 million dwellings which are owner-occupied, whereas there are 14·5 million which are rented. In this country, there are twice as many owner-occupied houses as there are rented in both the private and the public sectors.

The high figure of rented accommodation has come about in Germany, for example, because in the 1960s new tenancies were allowed to be let at the market rate after many years of rent control. But existing tenancies up to that time were allowed to stand and existing tenants had their rents increased in line with costs and had security of tenure.

Much the same seems to have happened in France. In the 1960s rent control was removed from new tenancies. In Germany, substantial tax advantages were given to encourage higher income individuals to become small landlords. The same has happened in the United States under the tax shelter schemes there. One cannot but help notice the difference between the positions there and here.

In Britain, under the business expansion scheme, rich individuals are encouraged to buy farms and even office blocks, but they are not encouraged by any form of tax shelter to build properties for rent by ordinary people.

Therefore, the first conclusion to which I have come is that private landlords in Britain are treated worse than they are anywhere else.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): What happened in relation to security of tenure in France and Germany?

Mr. Hordern: I have mentioned that. Security of tenure was allowed in those countries, and I shall deal with that later.

Rent control has existed in Britain since 1915. I accept that improvements have been achieved in the Housing Act 1980, in the form of both shorthold and assured tenancies. But if one looks at the small amount of private rented accommodation that is available — now only about 10 per cent. of all rented accommodation — it is clear that there are many bogus lets. There are holiday lets, licences, and what one can only call bogus company lets.

A survey carried out some little time ago among students in Leeds revealed that 60 per cent. of their temporary agreements were in the form of licences. In their evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment, witnesses from Liverpool suggested that 50 per cent. of all new lettings might be in the form of non-exclusive licences. The Small Landlords Association, in its evidence to the Select Committee, said that not one of its members who re-let property ever let it out again under the terms of the Rent Act. The same proportion, about 50 per cent., was found by the GLC when it made a survey.

In contrast to both the owner-occupier and local authority sectors, there is no incentive for the private landlord to invest in his property. Therefore, rent control is not the only reason — although it is certainly the most important — why the supply of rented accommodation has dried up. The lack of incentive for landlords has also exacerbated that effect. The difficulty is that the fair rent regime has done nothing to encourage demand to provide accommodation for rental, although, of course, the demand has always been there.

Therefore, the second conclusion that I reach is that there is a substantial demand for privately-rented accommodation, which, under the present arrangements, there is no prospect of meeting.

It is generally agreed that there is a shortage of housing, and that the quality of our housing stock is not what it should be. There is a substantial incentive for people to become owner-occupiers and there are further substantial subsidies for council house tenants. But the effect of mortgage tax relief has been to increase the price of houses, and the cost of subsidies to councils has restricted the number of council houses that have been built.

Furthermore, the effect of low council house rents is to freeze the population in their present homes. It is not possible for them to move freely from one part of the country to another. It is particularly harsh on those who live in areas of high unemployment, who are encouraged by my right hon. Friends in government to move from those areas to places where work can be found, only to find that there is nowhere for them to live when they get there. It is almost impossible to escape from places like Liverpool to other parts of the country because of the difficulty of finding accommodation to rent. Except at high rents, there is no free unsubsidised market in rents. That accounts for the rapid decline in rented accommodation, which now represents about 10 per cent. of the total.

There is no question but that the present position has been brought about by the Rent Acts. There seem to be two difficulties about the Acts. First, there is not enough rent for landlords to care for their properties and there is not enough property to let. Secondly, we have the problem of no security for the landlord. I do not think that it is possible to interfere with present arrangements and contracts, but

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if the Rent Acts were repealed for new lettings—as was the position in France and Germany in the 1960s—rents could be de-controlled.

Of course, rents would rise. I know that the Government are conscious of the effect of a rapid rise in rents in the private sector. As it is, some 35 to 40 per cent. of council tenants now receive housing benefit, and the costs of that would also rise. I believe that the costs have already risen from about £278 million in 1979 to £2,780 million in 1985-86. That is a tenfold increase.

What do the Government think will happen if and when the councils are allowed to spend the £5 billion that they have from the sale of their council homes? What is certain is that there will be a big increase in building and a large extra demand for housing benefit. However, if the Rents Acts are repealed, the rent in the landlord's hands will be taxable for income tax, and if the property is let by a company corporation tax will apply. It must be much cheaper for the Government to increase the supply of rented accommodation in the private sector than to have a vast expansion of rented accommodation in the public sector.

I do not think that there would be much effect on the public sector borrowing requirement if the Government were substantially to increase, or to allow an increase in, the amount of property available in the private sector. It would surely be better to encourage more privately rented accommodation and to replace housing benefit with a minimum guaranteed income, but not until the Rent Acts have been repealed. It would also be better to allow the housing market to conform more closely to demand. As the House will know, there is no rent control in the United States and there is a substantial shift of people and work from one part of the country to another—notably from the north to the south. In the United States, people are prepared to build for rent, and in West Germany there are subsidies for landlords to improve their homes. But in the United Kingdom there is no subsidy, and the landlord cannot offset loss of rental income against other income. Therefore, there is positive discrimination against the private landlord in the United Kingdom. There is no incentive whatever to let, and consequently there is no temporary housing market.

For those who cannot afford to buy, or who cannot find council homes, the only alternative is to depend upon their councils—as they do to an increasing extent—for bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Hon. Members should recognise the cost of such accommodation. From the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, I believe that the cost of such board and lodging has increased from £166 million in December 1982 and now, together with the cost of private and voluntary residential care, is about £570 million a year. That figure is expected to increase by 50 per cent. by the end of the year.

It is a rotten kind of market if those who want to move home or those who want to set up home on their own for the first time, and who are unable to afford to buy or to get on a council house list quickly enough, find that the only alternative is bed-and-breakfast accommodation at very great cost to the country. I do not have to remind the House about the recent case of a family staying at the Adelphi hotel in Liverpool.

People are stuck in an institutionalised housing market. There is no attempt to generate competition to give people what they want at a price that they can afford. It is perfectly respectable to rent rather than to buy and, to the extent that people did so, there would be less mortgage tax relief. The Treasury has not sufficiently explored the financial consequences—I believe that they would be beneficial, compared with the present situation—of making possible a substantial increase in rented accommodation.

I believe that there should be security of tenure, provided that the landlord is allowed to charge the economic rent at a time of rent review. Should there be any dispute at that time, there should be the right to go to arbitration.

The repeal of the Rent Acts would do more than any other measure to enable people to move freely about the country. At present, people are tied to their council homes, many of them with little hope of finding jobs. Alternatively, they have to fall back on bed-and-breakfast accommodation if they wish to move.

Repeal would do more than any other measure to boost the construction industry at no cost to the Exchequer. It would also give thousands of young people the opportunity of having a roof over their heads—something that at present they have no prospect of achieving.

I do not ask for any restraint in the building of council houses. I ask only that it should be supplemented in the private sector. The Rent Acts have caused too much misery to too many young people for too long. It is time that they were swept away, to enable thousands of young people to find their first home and have some hope for the future.

2.12 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) has made a thoughtful speech. He recognises that owner-occupiers receive a massive subsidy by way of mortgage interest relief—£3·5 billion to £4 billion this year, compared with a sum only one seventh or one eighth as large which goes to council tenants. The hon. Gentleman also conceded that there is, at present, evasion of the Rent Acts on an extraordinary scale by means of licensed and other lettings that leave people with no security, as well as lettings to students, corporate lettings and so on. The hon. Gentleman recognises—as anyone who looks at the problem of rented accommodation must recognise—the problem of lack of mobility in this country. I often feel that those who live in rented accommodation in my constituency are trapped. At the poor end of the market, they cannot buy accommodation, and if they want to move in order to be with relatives, to seek work or to retire, they find themselves in a trap. The arrangements for mobility in local authority accommodation do not work sufficiently well.

The hon. Gentleman recognised the enormous and wasteful cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation and finally conceded that, under any regime under which the Rent Acts were repealed, there should be security of tenure. One of the extraordinary contradictions of the Conservative Governments in the 1950s was that they repealed security of tenure in 1957 for many Rent Act tenants while in 1954 they gave security of tenure to business tenants.

Any suggestion that the Rent Acts are to be repealed is likely to make hackles rise on the Opposition Benches, but

I must concede—although I disagree with him—that the hon. Gentleman spoke thoughtfully and with good intentions. The problem—as the hon. Gentleman had to concede—is that the abolition of the Rent Acts involves the abolition of any form of rent control. That is the nub of the difficulty.

Those who look for rented accommodation are at the lower end of the wage scale. They will tend to take on commitments beyond their means if there is no rent control, or they will not find accommodation. The housing market is not homogeneous, even for owner-occupiers. The poverty, deprivation and lack of capital to carry out repairs among owner-occupiers is rapidly emerging. The English house condition survey showed that 1·1 million homes were unfit and that another 500,000 needed a substantial amount of money spent on them. Many such homes are concentrated not among private landlords, of whom there are few, but poorer owner-occupiers.

Examination of who occupies council estates reveals that Lambeth is not unusual in having about 66 per cent. of its tenants in receipt of housing benefit. We shall not help those who need rented accommodation by abolishing the Rent Acts because it will not result in their finding access to the accommodation that they need. In some parts of the country, of course, there is no acute housing shortage. In those circumstances, the fair rent provisions do not apply as the fair rent is the market rate. The Rent Acts merely remove the scarcity element. Acute shortages of accommodation in city areas will not be solved by abolition of the Rent Acts. Indeed, I believe that abolition would do more harm than good.

I agree that we need much more rented accommodation. That is why we decry the Government's attack on making property available to rent. We do not quarrel quite as much as we used to about the right to buy, but about 800,000 homes out of a stock of about 5 million council dwellings have been lost and the amount of money made available to housing associations has been cut rapidly, again reducing the amount of money available to build new homes to rent.

We should consider carefully some of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about investment and tax treatment. There is no point in a tax regime that disadvantages the landlord, the tenant and the country. The main thrust must come not from repealing the Rent Acts, which should be strengthened to deal with abuses, but by encouraging greater investment by local authorities and housing associations. Ultimately, the problem of lack of housing to rent is the problem of those who are not rich enough to buy accommodation or who, for various reasons, do not want to buy. Despite some malfunctions, the Rent Acts have served the country well.

2.18 pm

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) and congratulate him on presenting a motion on this important subject with his customary lucidity and eloquence.

I was still in my political pubescence when I was jolted into awareness of the problems caused by rent control by a speech delivered in my constituency by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) with his characteristic flamboyance. He described rent controls as a great evil which was the mother of five other evils. His predictions have been confirmed. Although he seemed characteristically to overstate the case, the evidence shows that he understated the extent of the damage that can be done by rent controls.

The first evil which the right hon. Gentleman described was under-occupation in the rented sector. When children leave home, families do not move to smaller accommodation because they cannot afford to leave a rent-controlled property.

The second evil is the encouragement and artificial inducement that exists for landlords to sell rented property to owner-occupiers, thereby diminishing the stock of property available to rent. Although the Conservative party supports owner-occupation, we do not support the artificial stimulation of it at the expense of the necessary continuation of an adequate rented sector.

The third evil that is the result of rent control is the immobility that it imposes on people. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham made that the point of his motion. With 3 million unemployed, and with jobs available in some parts, not least in my constituency, those who oppose the abolition or reduction of rent controls must square that with the fact that in so doing they are perpetuating and prolonging unemployment, which is a greater evil than any evils with which rent controls may deal.

The fourth evil still persists and is the continuing disrepair and dilapidation into which private rented accommodation is inclined to fall if landlords cannot charge the market rent.

The fifth evil is the injustice between tenants and non-tenants, and between tenants and landlords. Often a landlord is poorer than the tenant of his controlled property.

Since those days, evidence has accumulated to show that a further two evils exist. The Milner Holland report in 1965 made it clear that because of rent controls landlords have an inducement to harass and winkle out tenants so that they can sell their properties with vacant possession. That is bound to persist so long as rent controls keep rents below the market level.

A further problem caused by rent controls is the discrimination against newcomers to the housing market, including discrimination against immigrants, young people, those who have no capital, and those who have newly formed separate households because of divorce or because they have recently left home. Plenty of evidence is accumulating to show that discrimination is the inevitable consequence of rent controls. A study by Doling shows that, whereas in Birmingham 10 per cent. of those in rented accommodation are immigrants, none was in rented property with registered rents. In other words, they all had to escape into the residual free market which we tenuously allow to exist alongside the regulated sector. That is characteristic of the problems created by rent control.

Wherever a landlord is forced to set his rent below the market level, he will have a queue of applicants and be able to discriminate between them. He will often discriminate against immigrants, the young, families with young children, and so on. We must ensure that that cannot exist.

The problem is especially acute in my constituency, which is comparatively prosperous. For that reason, because of the development of the M25 and the M1, and so on, people try to move in and thus drive up the prices of owner-occupied houses. Local people, and others who

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

would like to move in the area for jobs, and would be prepared to pay a market rent for a room or two, cannot do so, so long as rent controls persist.

Even if we are forced to keep the present structure of rent controls, I hope that we shall ensure that new lettings are exempt from rent controls and that the problem of housing benefit is tackled by not making new lettings eligible for full housing benefit, so that the problem is not impossible to finance.

One reason why we have been so reluctant to move in that direction is that we thought that if we abolished rent controls, even on new lets, landlords would not respond by bringing forward properties because they would be afraid that a Labour Government would reimpose rent controls. That fear has diminished because people no longer take seriously the prospect of a Labour Government, and that threat is consequently not so damaging as previously. The evidence of the British Telecom flotation shows that more than 1 million people are prepared to put their money on the belief that there will never be another Labour Government. I believe that landlords would be prepared to do the same. If we had the courage to tackle the problems, we could overcome the great evils that rent controls have spawned. I hope that the House will support the motion.

2.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): I have a very few minutes in which to respond to a compressed but thoughtful and interesting debate, in which big concepts have been clearly put before us.

The Government recognise, as I think my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Hordern) knows, a good many of the problems. In particular, we sympathise with the emphasis on mobility in his motion. That is why we have framed our housing policies around a mobility package in both the public and private sectors. There are the right to exchange, the tenants' exchange scheme and the national mobility scheme in the public sector. For owner-occupiers, we are trying to make the process of buying and selling a house less complex and expensive. I know that my hon. Friend supports that effort.

We have introduced a range of low-cost home ownership initiatives, which will help former tenants who want to move and take up a new job, and also a new form of tenure. It will help existing owner-occupiers seeking to overcome differences in housing prices.

I have little argument with the basic analysis of the history, going back to Lloyd George — the wartime increase of rent and mortgage interest, and the war restrictions Act, which in its title so clearly describes the conditions and the unusual origins of that measure. The steady decline in the rented sector since that period is a matter that is not challenged from either side of the House.

I was pleased to see that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) wanted to restore the rented sector, although by different means from those favoured by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham. I think that the difference as usual, between our two parties rests in the fact that the hon. Gentleman wants to expand the public rented sector, while we see needs being more flexibly and economically met by the private rented sector.

The much diminished private rented sector still meets a vital public need, even in its reduced form. Without it, young people and others would be in very great difficulty, even at the level at which it exists today.

The other main aspect of existing Government policy to which I want to draw attention is the package of measures in the Housing Act 1980. In that Act we specifically took action to remove disincentives to letting and thereby to encourage an expansion of the sector. Many of those measures were designed with the needs of the mobile in mind. In particular, we introduced the shorthold scheme, which enables non-resident landlords to let their property in the sure knowledge that they can regain possession on the expiry of a fixed term, which must be not less than one year and not more than five years. The House will know that the Labour party has done its best to undermine the scheme by threatening to repeal the Act —a threat only diminished by the unlikelihood of its ever being in a position to carry it out. None the less people investing their money have to look at even the most unlikely events, and the Labour party's attitude has probably done something to damage the scheme

The Housing Act 1980 also saw the introduction of the assured tenancy scheme, a much needed initiative to encourage the provision of newly built property for private renting, an activity which for too many years has virtually ceased. One hundred and sixty-three landlord bodies have now obtained approval to let on assured tenancies. The schemes they have undertaken, although still only limited in number, have demonstrated without doubt that there is a strong market for good quality housing for rent, and that it can be provided outside the Rent Acts on a basis that is acceptable to both landlord and tenant. I think that the measure has reminded us of that fact.

The Act introduced other changes designed to encourage landlords to make more accommodation available. Unfortunately, time does not enable me to go into them all. Collectively, however, the measures taken in the Housing Act 1980 add up to a package which significantly improved the prospects for private renting. But that is only, perhaps, the beginning of the story. I want to say to my hon. Friends—including my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who also spoke today — that the Government have considerable sympathy with the principle of the views expressed. I do not think that I can do better than to quote my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction, who said at our last party conference:

> "The Rent Acts have injured the very people that they were designed to help. They have contributed to what has been virtually the drying up of private rented accommodation. They have harmed the interests of both landlord and tenant alike."

It is with these considerations in mind that we have engaged in a further review of private rented sector legislation. I do not want to leave anyone with the impression that the Government are about to repeal the Rent Acts, full stop. It is only right that we should assess the impact of our earlier initiatives and consider what more can be done to encourage private landlords to meet the demand for rented accommodation. Those with knowledge of the Rent Acts and related legislation will know that this is an extremely complex, not to say highly controversial, subject. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friends will be patient when I say that I cannot——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

SMALL BUSINESS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 January].

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Not moved.

WORKING CONDITIONS OF GOVERNMENT TRAINEES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

Miss Beverley Channing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.30 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I rise to draw the attention of the House to the plight of a young Plymouth girl, Miss Beverley Channing, and, I hope, to illustrate the need for better facilities for girls, or men, who find themselves in similar circumstances. Her plight was recently highlighted by the well-known television programme "That's Life". I gave background information to the programme on the strength of several years' acquaintance with the problem and increasing frustration at the inability to deal with it. It was Lord Elton, in a letter on the subject to me in the autumn of last year, who rightly described the case as one

"which falls so awkwardly between the hospital and prison systems."

I shall briefly outline the circumstances. Beverley Channing is now a young woman in her early 20s, the adopted child of Mr. and Mrs. Channing. It was observed that her behaviour was becoming difficult in her early teens. It may go further back, but it was certainly from adolescence onwards. Most laymen would now describe her behaviour as antisocial; not wicked, but more akin to the uncontrolled naughtiness of a child. Her intelligence quotient is good and goes far beyond that of a child, but she suffers from tantrums, which will sometimes cause her to strike out with her fists. On a number of occasions she has been known to set fire to things, not with the dedicated evil of an arsonist, but more out of what appears to be temper and spite, and in a way which so far has not caused any damage or harm to anyone. She has been known to break windows in the course of this antisocial behaviour, and on occasions her personal habits are unpleasant.

All this behaviour has led to a miserable cycle of appearances before the magistrates courts and periods of imprisonment when the magistrates have not known what else to do with her. As the result of co-operation between various authorities, she was put into a private hospital, St. Andrew's, in Northampton for a time. Unfortunately, although this was done with the best of intentions and was a costly undertaking, her behaviour showed no real signs of improvement. Some feel that her condition deteriorated, but that is a matter of some controversy. There was certainly no marked improvement.

Therefore, she was removed from hospital and she has been a voluntary patient at the local psychiatric hospital, Moorhaven, under the care of one of the consultants, Dr. Poole. On occasions, Beverley walks out of hospital and often sleeps rough. I fear that sometimes she has been taken advantage of by men seeking sexual favours, a most disturbing aspect of the case. Various temporary arrangements have been made for her. At the moment she is going by day to what is called in Plymouth the Monday club, which has no connection with the more famous one, but is intended for the unemployed. She goes to a night shelter. At least, a bed is available for her at a night shelter in Plymouth, though she does not always take advantage of it.

I have the impression that her physical health is now deteriorating, and I feel extremely anxious for her both in the short term and longer term if a better solution is not found. The real problem in a sense is that she does not fit into any category, as Lord Elton wisely observed.

[Miss Janet Fookes]

She has been the subject of diagnosis by no fewer than five psychiatrists. All of them—this is amazing when dealing with experts—agree that she is not suffering from a mental illness in the terms of the Mental Health Act 1983. She cannot, therefore, lawfully be detained under any section of that Act. They agree, however, that she has what they term a personality disorder; I suppose we would call it bad and unstable behaviour. That means that it is difficult, without her co-operation, to make any long-term arrangement for her.

I pay tribute to all those who have tried to help her. I cannot fault any of them. Those in the probation service, magistrates court, police, social services and the psychiatrists have all done their best according to their lights. Indeed, they have bent over backwards to be of assistance. The fact remains that her case is intractable.

It is interesting to note that a recent report by the Select Committee on Social Services entitled "Community Care" pinpointed the general problem. I appreciate that the Committee was speaking of cases much wider than that of Beverley Channing, but its report stated:

> "Twenty-five years after the 1959 Act, informed opinion is slowly returning to the idea that there will always be a substantial number of mentally disabled people who are entitled to some sort of protection and support which may involve their partial withdrawal from the rest of the community."

That sums up Beverley's case.

I should like to see some sort of halfway house, a special type of hostel, geared to the needs of such extremely difficult people where a stable background, but with a degree of compulsion, could be created for them. I would see this compulsion perhaps in the form of a probation order of greater length than one would usually expect, with attached to it a requirement that the person remains in the care of the hostel.

The only alternative which could have merit, if only she could be found, would be one of those special breed of landladies with a kind and caring, yet firm, approach, who would be able to provide for the physical needs of the person and at the same time give support. That would be something on the lines of the fostering of difficult children, which has been pioneered by a few local authorities.

One or the other of those would seem suitable. However, the backing of some compulsion is needed. I do not for a moment suggest that Beverley requires to be locked up in the old sense of the term for an indefinite period. Something in between is needed.

I realise that to suggest a hostel for one would be ludicrous. I understand, however, that there are others of a similar character to Beverley. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) has drawn my attention to a case which he believes to be very similar indeed to that of Beverley and which is causing him concern.

I have received three letters following the television programme outlining cases which seem to be very similar. The research section of the programme has told me of at least eight other cases—there are about a dozen more—and has sent me details of those eight. I should point out that Miss Esther Rantzen has told me that the research section has not had a chance to carry out a thorough investigation to find out whether those cases are precisely in parallel, but at least there is a prima facie case that there are other people in a similar position.

Even if there are only a handful of people throughc the country who are in this situation, they pose a probl which causes endless anxiety to the authorities, whetl they be magistrates, social workers, psychiatrists or t like. The impact upon the families of these people can absolutely tragic. One only has to talk to these families read the letters that they have written to understand ve clearly the cost to and, indeed, the ruination of the liv of those who are most closely associated with the people.

I cannot, of course, give details of the other case because they must remain confidential. However, I a sure that arrangements could be made, with the permissic of those concerned, for the details to be sent to my ho Friend if he felt that it would be helpful to have them.

I have sought to point out what I believe to be a mo worrying gap in the provision that we make for a sma group of people. I look to my hon. Friend th Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health an Social Security to provide a constructive and much-neede reply.

2.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State fo Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): I ca well understand why my hon. Friend the Member fo Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) has raised this issue as th subject of this afternoon's Adjournment debate. Th circumstances surrounding the young woman concerne and her family have been of considerable local interest fo quite a long time. In her turn, I know that my hon. Friend has taken a considerable interest in this case as the Membe of Parliament for the constituency in which this youn woman lives. Both the local interest and the interest of my hon. Friend has been reflected in the BBC televisior programme "That's Life", which was broadcast at the end of February. Everything that my hon. Friend has said this afternoon and the work she has already done on behalf of this young woman shows that my hon. Friend has her interests very much at heart and that she is also concerned about the effects upon her family. Families are very important in cases of this kind.

The individual case has been given a wider context by the publication of the Social Services Committee report on community care for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people. This is certainly not the occasion to try to respond to that very thorough and valuable report. However, I must say in passing that it seems to me that much of the publicity so far has not done that all-party report much justice either.

I do not want to dwell at length on the details of Miss Channing's personal history. My hon. Friend has said most of what needs to be said. I think my hon. Friend is looking to me to comment on services and policies and upon what we might do in the future to try to improve those services and policies. My hon. Friend illustrated two clear ways in which we could properly develop our policies and hence our services. I am grateful to her for doing so. The points that she made were very thought-provoking. I believe that my hon. Friend wants me to deal with them rather than to look in any greater detail at the case history of someone who, thus far, has had more than her fair share of personal problems and who probably deserves as much privacy as she needs increased help.

I am sure that most hon. Members would hate to have their case notes read out in public. My hon. Friend has reminded the House of details which have been public

knowledge for many years. However, I wish to direct the attention of the House to a slightly wider way in which the Channing case can be viewed.

Doctors, the media and politicians should pause and consider the extent to which we should reveal personal details of individual patients with mental or physical problems or a combination of both. Important ethical issues have begun to emerge in the past year or two. I refer not so much to this case as to others which, prima facie, seem to involve the revelation of details about patients suffering from kidney failure or allegedly suffering from AIDS. The details have been gratuitously and easily made known to the public in a way that would never have occurred two years ago. We need to think very hard about exactly where the line should be drawn and how to achieve a new consensus about the balance between the patients' interests and needs and the public's right to know. I hope that the debate started by my hon. Friend today will allow us to go some way further towards the achievement of that end.

My caution about publicising case histories does not mean that Miss Channing is someone about whom the DHSS "does not want to know"—far from it. My noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, the Under-Secretary of State, wants to know—and indeed knows—all that he can about every detail of Miss Channing's case. The doctors and health workers in Plymouth want to know everything possible about Miss Channing and her problems, and indeed they do know, as my hon. Friend the Member for Drake has so adequately illustrated.

The trouble is that, in cases of the type to which my hon. Friend has referred, knowledge does not always lead to solution or cure. Whether it be in relation to getting people off heroin or stopping the spread of AIDS, it is easy to say that we need more knowledge but very much harder to find a solution. Nevertheless, we wish to know all that we possibly can about this unfortunate young woman so that we can do all that we can to help her. I believe that we have all the knowledge we need, but finding a solution which takes account of the patient's needs, her civil rights and her right to privacy is very hard.

I enter one caveat. There are people — my hon. Friend is not one of them—who see the link between the services which might be able to provide help and the people who need that help as essentially a matter of locking people up in hospitals until they are "better", but that is certainly not my view. Those who commit offences and are convicted by the courts are, of course, subject to whatever constraints the courts impose on them. That is not for us to discuss or dispute. In addition, the Mental Health Act provides for the detention of patients. In that legislation Parliament went into considerable detail to spell out who could and could not be detained, in what circumstances and subject to what safeguards. I pay tribute again to the Social Services Committee for its very wise comments about the patient's rights. That is the other side of the coin.

I shall reveal nothing new about Miss Channing's case so as to respect her privacy, just as my hon. Friend the Member for Drake has done. It is clear that Miss Channing has had mental and behavioural problems of one kind or another at least since her early teens and my hon. Friend has suggested that the problem may go back even further. It is public knowledge that Miss Channing has had contact with the courts, the probation service, hospitals, community nurses and the generality of the Health Service.

All those services have experienced serious difficulties with her, but they have worked together to try to help her. I am glad that my hon. Friend paid compliments to those people, who work so hard in the NHS, and I am sure that they will be grateful to her. It was in the wake of a collective initiative involving a number of people from different services that Miss Channing spent some time being treated in a private specialist hospital, St. Andrew's, Northampton.

There was a collective review before she left St. Andrew's last year. Professional assessment concluded that she was not then detainable under the Mental Health Act. We must rely on professional and clinical judgment. It is not for me, as a politician, or for anyone else to make ad hoc judgments about these cases. As my hon. Friend said, five specialists agreed that Miss Channing was not detainable. Such unanimity is not always apparent in these assessments.

Without detention, a patient can, of course, be admitted to hospital for treatment if the hospital thinks that it can help and if the patient is willing to let the staff try to help. It is a statement of the obvious to say that none of the treatment provided has had much lasting, positive effect in this case, though that is no criticism of those who have laboured hard and long to secure a better situation for Miss Channing.

Miss Channing is subject to a probation order, but both health and social services are in touch and are helping as best they can. My hon. Friend made some interesting points about the possibility of probation orders being extended and made more prescriptive. We shall have to ponder her ideas. I was also interested in her view that we should turn to some of the old school of landladies to help with such cases. The sort of landladies that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), who is my PPS, and I remember from our university days could perhaps have had a formidable and salutary effect in this case.

Miss Channing attends a day centre or probation office and has the support of a trained psychiatric nurse. I wish to put the facts on the record. All the facilities have not helped to solve this young woman's problems, but they are available and are being given freely.

I wish to correct any impression that this is a simple case of someone wanting treatment and being denied it or of wanting a hospital place and being denied it. Social services and NHS support is available when required and the Moorhaven hospital staff, who do excellent work, are ready to try to help again and again, as they have tried on a number of occasions in the past. However, of course, they need the co-operation of Miss Channing, her parents, friends, and those who seek to support her.

Some have suggested in this case and previous similar cases that a special hospital place should be provided. That is a tricky issue, because admission to a special hospital requires both that the potential patient is detainable under the Mental Health Act and that he or she should present a danger which justifies that special security. Those are clear preconditions and we are told by clinical and professional advisers that neither condition is satisfied in Miss Channing's case. I am sure that no one would wish any person who did not satisfy those criteria to be gratuitously locked up.

[Mr. John Patten]

On more general issues of policy, my Department has been taking a special interest in the range of problems and people covered by the general description "hard to place or hard to help", in which category Miss Channing falls, at least for the moment.

Some of the individuals involved in the category of hard-to-place, hard-to-help are mentally ill. Some are mentally handicapped. Some are psychopathic. Some have behaviour disorders. Some seem to have mixed or uncertain characteristics. There is a whole range of problems facing a small group of people who desperately need our help and whom we must strive to help.

I am glad to say that there has been a lot of progress in various ways in the ability and the willingness of the service to help people with difficult problems. We have still some way to go before either systems or science provide us with the answer. However, I can give three assurances.

First, we in the Department and my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, who has special responsibility for this area of policy, are working for further progress in service development, including bringing together different perceptions of the needs and different experie success or failure in meeting them, as well as re authorities of their existing responsibilities and re —all set against a small number of cases which be dealt with.

Secondly, a range of services and people in the tried over a long period to help Miss Channing and like her. This slow progress has not been due to a of effort or lack of provision. It simply has not w In the real world, things do not always work very

Thirdly, those willing to help Miss Channing and like her are in touch with her now. They are willing further initiatives if they have her co-operation o condition becomes such that compulsory detention the Mental Health Act turns out to be appropri clinical and professional advice.

I must thank my hon. Friend for her interest a giving me the chance to explain the difficulties that attempted to outline. I am also grateful for her detail thought-provoking ideas, which I shall take awa discuss with my colleagues.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 February 1985

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Tea Room

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) when the improvement will take place on the ventilation system in the Members' Tea Room;

(2) what plans he has to improve the general working conditions for staff in the Members' Tea Room.

Mr. Biffen: A refurbishment of the Members' Tea Room, which would include cooling of the counter area and other improvements in working conditions for the staff there, has been requested. The funds available for the parliamentary works programme of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment are limited, and I cannot at the moment say when this scheme will gain a place in the programme.

Transport Select Committee (Costs)

Mr. Clay asked the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed as representing the House of Commons Commission what was the estimated cost of the travelling expenses, staff hours, printing and other services provided for the Transport Committee for its investigation of the financing of public transport up to and including 20 February.

Mr. Beith: The estimated costs of Committee travel in connection with this inquiry are £2,200; of printing £30,900; and of specialist advice £2,300. It is not possible without undue expense to estimate the staff hours devoted to this inquiry, which is only one of several that the Committee has been pursuing for the past year, nor the costs of other services.

Gallery Tickets

Mr. Alton asked the Lord Privy Seal, if he will list the arrangements for allocating all tickets for all galleries, apart from the Press Gallery, listing the offices through which they are distributed.

Mr. Biffen: Members may obtain Admission Orders to the galleries of the House by the following methods:

Gallery	*Remarks*
1. *Strangers Gallery*	
a. By routine allocation by rota of two orders every nine sitting days, Mondays to Thursdays.	Orders sent to Members by Admission Order office or collected.
b. By application on sitting Mondays to Thursdays for allocated orders returned.	To Admission Order Office.
2. *Special Galleries*	
a. By advance application at Admission Order Office for up to two orders per day (with a maximum of four Orders per week).	Orders sent to Members by Admission Order Office or collected.
b. By advance application for orders to be taken up after 3.00 pm, Mondays to Thursdays and after 10.00 am on Fridays.	Issued by Serjeant at Arms in the Chair, usually on presentation of a green card.
c. From the Serjeant at Arms in the Chair immediately after Prayers	Queue tickets available from Bar Doorkeeper ten minutes before sitting time.
d. From the Serjeant at Arms in the Chair at other times.	Dependent on availability of spaces.
3. *Mr. Speaker's Gallery* By application to Mr. Speaker's Assistant Secretary (Parliamentary).	
4. *Serjeant at Arms' Gallery* By application to the Serjeant at Arms' office.	
5. *Distinguished Strangers' Gallery* By application to Mr. Speaker's Assistant Secretary (Parliamentary).	
6. *Commonwealth Gallery* By application to the United Kingdom Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.	For Commonwealth visitors only.
7. *Ambassadors' Gallery* By application from Embassies.	Ambassadors or Chargés d'Affaires only.
8. *Diplomatic Gallery* On application from Embassies.	Available to Members from Serjeant at Arms in the Chair if not taken up by Embassies.
9. *Under the Gallery* On application to party Whips.	

Members' attention is drawn to the Serjeant at Arms' publication "Admission to the Galleries."

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid (Complaints) Tribunals

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General whether there are any plans to transfer the responsibilities of the Legal Aid (Complaints) Tribunals to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Administration of Justice Bill introduced in another place by the Lord Chancellor provides for the jurisdiction in respect of legal aid complaints presently exercisable by the Legal Aid (Complaints) Tribunals to be exercised instead by a disciplinary tribunal of the Senate of the Inns of Court and the Bar and the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal.

Coal Industry Dispute (Magistrates)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General how many additional stipendiary magistrates have been appointed since the start of the miners' dispute.

The Attorney-General: Thirty additional stipendaries have been appointed by the Lord Chancellor to sit between 3 September and 1 March to try cases resulting from the miners' dispute at Birkenhead, Chesterfield, Doncaster, Peterlee, Seaham, Mansfield, Nottingham, Pontefract,

Rotherham, St. Helens and Scunthorpe. The sittings have been continuous at Chesterfield and Rotherham; elsewhere they have been occasional or intermittent. The amount of time sat by individual stipendaries ranges from eight weeks to one day.

Duty Solicitors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Attorney-General, if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each regional legal aid area, those magistrates' courts where it has been decided that duty solicitors should be in attendance.

The Attorney-General: It is the intention that arrangements will exist for duty solicitors to be in attendance at the busier courts. These will normally be those where on average 10 or more defendants make a first appearance at each court session otherwise than in connection with motoring offences. Attendance schemes may also be approved in less busy courts where circumstances justify it. Courts where schemes have been, or are about to be, implemented are listed as follows, by legal aid area:

No. 1 London (South)
Bexley
Brentford
Bromley
Croydon
Ealing
Kingston-upon-Thames
Richmond
South Western
Tower Bridge
Wallington
Wimbledon
Inner London Juvenile Courts:
Greenwich
Lambeth
Southwark

No. 2 South Eastern
Brighton
Crawley
Guildford (Adult & Juvenile)
Hastings

No. 3 Southern
Aylesbury
Basingstoke
Bournemouth
Havant
Odiham (Aldershot)
Oxford
Poole
Portsmouth
Reading
Southampton

No. 4 South Western
Bristol
Exeter City
Gloucester
Salisbury
Sedgemoor
Swindon
Taunton Deane
Weston-super-Mare

No. 5 South Wales
Cardiff
Newport

No. 6 West Midland
Coventry
Dudley
Halesowen
Solihull
Stourbridge
Sutton Coldfield
Walsall
Warley
Warwick
West Bromwich
Wolverhampton

No. 7 North Weston
Accrington
Blackburn
Bolton
Burnley
Bury
Church
Eccles
Lancaster
Leigh
Makerfield
Middleton & Heywood
Oldham
Pendle
Rochdale
Rossendale
Salford
Stockport
Trafford
Wigan

No. 8 Northern
Carlisle
Derwentside
Durham
Easington
Gateshead
Hartlepool
Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Market Street)
North Tyneside
Scarborough
Sedgefield
South Tyneside
Sunderland
Teesdale & Wear Valley
Teesside

No. 9 North Eastern
Barnsley
Bradford
Calder (Halifax)
Doncaster
Huddersfield
Leeds
Pontefract
Sheffield

No. 10 East Midland
Grimsby & Cleethorpes
Ilkeston
Leicester City
Mansfield
Northampton
Nottingham City
Nottingham County
Worksop

No. 11 Eastern
Billericay
Cambridge
Colchester
Great Yarmouth
Ipswich
Luton
North Bedfordshire
Norwich
Peterborough
Rochford
Southend-on-Sea
Thurrock

No. 12 Chester & N Wales
Chester
Crewe & Nantwich
Hawarden
Macclesfield
Mold
North Anglesey
Rhuddlan
Runcorn
Stoke-on-Trent
The Wrekin
Warrington
Widnes
Wilmslow
Wrexham Maelor

No. 13 London (Eas
Barking
Clerkenwell
Guildhall Justice Ro
Hampstead
Highbury Corner
Old Street
Redbridge
Stratford (Newham)
Thames
Waltham Forest
West Ham (Newham
Inner London Juveni
Court:
Islington

No. 14 London (Wes
Bow Street
Edmonton (Tottenhar
Hendon
Horseferry Road
Marlborough Street
Marylebone
Willesden

No. 15 Merseyside
Blackpool
Fylde (Lytham)
Knowlsey
Liverpool
Ormskirk
Southport
Wirral

Legal Aid

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Attorney whether European Community law is included w green form scheme for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: Yes.

MI5 (Offences)

Mr. Dubs asked the Attorney-General if any members of MI5 have been charged with offence the Official Secrets Act since 1979; and if considering any such prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: The only member or member of the security service whose prosecutio the Official Secrets Acts I have authorised since Michael Bettaney, who was tried and convicted of offences under section 1 of the 1911 Act. I h authorised the prosecution of any other member or member of the service for an offence under the A I understand that the Director of Public Prosecut currently looking into a case which may ra possibility that such an offence has been committed he has completed his consideration of it and has r to me, I am not in a position to comment further

PRIME MINISTER

Hill Farmers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what information the Government have as to whether the compensatory allowances paid to hill farmers have prevented any such farms going out of business.

The Prime Minister: No information is available on this. There is no doubt, however, that compensatory allowances represent a substantial part of net income on hill livestock farms.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what steps the Government are taking to reduce expenditure under the common agricultural policy; and whether she will publish in the *Official Report* the gross expenditure on agriculture in the United Kingdom each year since 1970, including the costs of administration, together with the receipts from (i) the disposal of surpluses and (ii) cash payments by the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: In 1984 we achieved a very restrictive agricultural prices package and the adoption, by the Council, of conclusions on budgetary discipline which include provisions designed to limit the growth of the Community's 'own resources'. This year we are seeking a similarly restrictive price policy and effective implementation of the budgetary discipline conclusions.

Expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom under national grants and subsidies and since 1972-73 under the CAP—net of proceeds from the sale of intervention stocks—together with receipts from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund is summarised in the White Papers to the annual review of agriculture.

The administration costs of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the proceeds from sales of stocks are set out in the annual appropriation accounts for the board's notes. The administration costs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are also set out in the annual appropriation accounts but those for agricultural administration are not shown separately.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the Government will appoint an expert to prepare a report on the operation of the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom on the lines of that prepared by Professor Silberston on textiles for the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to do so.

Milk Production (Co-responsibility Levy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the Government will propose the extension of the co-responsibility levy on milk production to hill firms.

The Prime Minister: The co-responsibility levy on milk applies to milk delivered to dairies except in mountain and hill areas listed under the terms of article 3(3) of Directive 75/268/EEC. The levy has not been an effective measure in curtailing the production of milk surpluses and the Government will be arguing for its reduction.

Disabled Persons (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment)

Mr. Ashley asked the Prime Minister what advice th National Advisory Council on the Employment c Disabled People gave to the Government when it wa consulted on the ratification of International Labou Organisation Convention No. 159 concerning vocationa rehabilitation and employment of disabled people.

The Prime Minister: The advice given to th Government by the National Advisory Council on th Employment of Disabled People on the ratification of th International Labour Organisation's Convention 159 following the council's discussions on 20 January and 2 April 1984, was as follows:

(i) Council has been advised that the Convention require ments as drafted do not appear to be fully compatible wit present United Kingdom law and practice.

(ii) Council notes the expert advice that legal impediment might seem to prevent the United Kingdom Governmen from ratifying the Convention. Council is unhappy abou accepting the reality of these impediments and its general, but not unanimous, view is that they should, if they exist, be removed and that the Convention should then be ratified.

Security Services

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she will list the powers of Ministers to grant members of the security services express immunity from the criminal law in respect of any activities they may carry out in an official capacity; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No Minister has any such powers.

President Reagan

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with President Reagan.

The Prime Minister: I am hoping to make a statement tomorrow.

Tribunals

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those tribunals which have discretion *(a)* whether or not to permit an applicant to be represented by a non-lawyer and *(b)* to permit an applicant to be represented by a non-lawyer.

The Prime Minister: The information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Members' Questions

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister whether, for the convenience of hon. Members, she will request all Ministers who wish to reply to parliamentary questions by referring to a document deposited in the Library to attach a photostat of the relevant extract from the document to the individual copy of the reply which is sent to the hon. Member.

The Prime Minister: Ministers try to be as helpful as possible, and I hope that, where it is practicable, hon. Members will be provided with relevant extracts from documents in the Library which have been referred to in

answers. But it would not be practicable to do this where the answer refers to a document that needs to be seen as a whole.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Duties)

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Ministerial duties of the Parliamentary Secretary of State to the Treasury; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury advises the Cabinet on parliamentary and other matters and, together with the Leader of the House, is responsible for the management of business in the House of Commons.

Falklands War (Rules of Engagement)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the changes in the rules of engagements in May 1982 allowed for the sinking of the Argentine naval vessels anywhere outside the Argentine territorial waters regardless of their position vis-à-vis the task force.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *526*]: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the change in rules of engagement on 2 May 1982 which permitted HMS Conqueror to attack the General Belgrano. This change in rules of engagement, resulting from the indications of the threat posed by the Argentine navy, permitted attacks on Argentine warships outside the total exclusion zone, as well as within it, within certain geographical limits which, for operational reasons, it is still not in the public interest to disclose. The precise position and course of individual ships was not relevant in the overall assessment of the threat.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Weights and Measures Act 1979

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to bring into effect section 19 of the Weights and Measures Act 1979.

Mr. Fletcher: Initiatives are actively being pursued by both the Department, in reviewing the beer glass regulations; and by the licensed trade, in drawing up proposals for guidelines for voluntary self-regulation. In these circumstances it would be premature to consider implementing Section 19.

Automated Manufacturing Technical Cent Excellence

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for T Industry what steps he is taking to establish an au manufacturing technical centre of excelle Warwickshire.

Mr. Butcher: I explained the position in my the hon. Member for Coventry, North-we Robinson) on 12 December 1984 at column *49* then Austin Rover and Warwick universit announced an advanced technology centre to be the campus. My officials are in discussion wi parties with a view to promoting the adoption o particularly in the automotive industry and its su through the centre.

Development Agencies (Expenditure)

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Tr Industry (1) what was the total sum of money spen North-West industrial development associati promotion and marketing for the financial years and 1983-84; and what is the expected spending financial year 1984-85;

(2) what was the total sum of money spent by N England development council on promotion and ma for the financial years 1982-83 and 1983-84; and the expected spending for the financial year 1984

(3) what was the total sum of money spent by and Cornwall development bureau on promoti marketing for the financial years 1982-83 and 19 and what is the expected spending for the financi 1984-85;

(4) what was the total sum of money spent by Midlands industrial development association on pro and marketing for the financial years 1982-8 1983-84; and what is the expected spending financial year 1984-85;

(5) what was the total sum of money spent Yorkshire and Humberside development associat promotion and marketing for the financial years 19 and 1983-84; and what is the expected spending financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Trippier: In the years specified, expendit the five English regional development organisatio inward investment promotion and marketing, exc staff and administration costs, was as follows:

	1982-83	*1983-84*	(e
	£	£	
North West Industrial Development Association	118,982	139,953	
North of England Development Council	250,150	661,453	
Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau	65,264	133,177	
West Midlands Industrial Development Association	—	*60,185	
Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association	146,966	235,044	

* West Midlands Industrial Development Association's first half-year of operation.

Car Industry

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the output of the United Kingdom car industry in 1984 compared with that in 1983.

Mr. Channon: The information was published 1 February 1985 issue of *British Business* (page 2 copy of which is available in the Library.

EC (Clothing, Footwear and Textiles)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce the EEC Commission's decision on the clothing, footwear and textile scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I would refer the hon. Member to my reply of 20 February to a question by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) at column *454-55*.

White Salt Industry

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the estimated cost of completion of the current inquiry of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the United Kingdom white salt industry;

(2) who is heading the current inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the United Kingdom white salt industry; and what previous experience he has of this industry;

(3) what is the purpose of the current inquiry of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the United Kingdom white salt industry;

(4) what compensation is made available for expenses incurred by individuals or businesses resulting from inquiries conducted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission;

(5) when he expects the current inquiry into the United Kingdom white salt industry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to be completed;

(6) if he will list all those firms whose operations have so far been studied in the course of the current Monopolies and Mergers Commission study of the United Kingdom white salt industry.

Mr. Fletcher: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation of the supply of white salt in the United Kingdom results from a reference made by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 50(1) and related provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973. Its purpose is to determine whether a monopoly situation exists, and whether any facts found by the commission operate against the public interest.

The investigation is being conducted by a group of six members of the commission, headed by Mr. D. G. Richards, a deputy chairman of the Commission, who is a former senior partner of a leading firm of chartered accountants and a past president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. The report is at present due to be delivered by 13 July 1985; the details of the conduct of the investigation are a matter for the Commission who are an independent body.

It is not practicable to allocate costs to particular inquiries but the cost of the commission's programme, often of 10-12 active references at any one time, is estimated at some £2 million for 1984-85. There is no provision for compensation for expenses incurred other than in the restricted circumstances dealt with in section 85 of the Fair Trading Act.

Patent Office

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to the answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *331-2*, how many of the representations received were in favour of changing the status of the Patent Office and how many were of the contrary view.

Mr. Butcher: Sixteen of the representations received were in favour of changing the status of the Patent Office, though ten of these were subject to provisos on implementation. Of the remaining representations, four were unconditionally opposed to changing the status of the Patent Office and thirty were prepared to accept a change of status if this was found to be necessary.

Hall Russell, Shipbuilders

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the companies which have submitted tenders for the purchase of Hall Russell, Shipbuilders, Aberdeen under the Government's privatisation proposals.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

"Scrutinising the Burdens on Industry"

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place a copy of "Scrutinising the Burdens on Industry" in the Library.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on follow-up and publication of the scrutiny of regulatory burdens will be taken as soon as possible.

Blank Video Tapes

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to introduce legislation to impose a levy on blank video tapes.

Mr. Butcher: A decision on whether to introduce such legislation will be taken after consultations have been completed on the Green Paper "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material", Cmnd. 9445, which was published on 19 February 1985.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scientific Research

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require all British universities, hospitals or other institutions in which scientific research is carried out to register foreign research contracts relating to *(a)* chemical warfare, *(b)* biological warfare and *(c)* any other military application or potential application with his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Ms. Richards (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Walthamstow can expect a reply to his letter of 25 July 1984 about Ms. Richards of London E.17, and his reminder letters of 12 November 1984 and 17 January 1985.

Mr. Brooke: I replied to the hon. Member on 19 February.

Open University

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department has disputed the expenditure shortfall of £13·5 million predicted by the Open University for the years 1984 to 1986.

Mr. Brooke: When the Open University made public its expenditure reduction target it was not clear how this had been derived. My right hon. Friend, therefore, requested an explanation from the university. That information is afforded in a document jointly agreed between the Department and the university and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the extent to which course materials have been reduced by the Open University during the last two academic years; and which faculties have been thus affected.

Mr. Brooke: The number of full credit equivalent courses available at the Open University in the academic years 1983 and 1984 is given for each faculty:

	1983	*1984*
Arts	16	16
Social Science	17	17
Education	11	11
Mathematics	9	10
Science	13	13
Technology	12	14
U-area (inter-faculty)	4	4
TOTAL	82	85

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of grant is to be allocated to the Open University for 1985.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend will announce the Open University's grant for the academic year 1985 and the indicated grants for 1986 and 1987 shortly.

Primary Schools (Reading Texts)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he intends to allocate to local education authorities to enable them to update reading texts in primary schools.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local authorities and schools themselves to determine their provision for books in the light of local circumstances, and to choose which books to purchase. We have made clear our view that this is an area which should be given priority within the resources available. The Government's plans for local authority expenditure on education in 1985-86 provide scope for some improvement in the level of provision per pupil for books, compared to 1982-83, provided costs are contained and feasible savings made elsewhere.

Teachers (Training)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will establish facilities to provide in-service training for teachers lasting at least one school term in every five years of service.

Mr. Dunn: As indicated in the White Paper "Teacher Quality" (Cmnd. 8836), the Government believe that all teachers need from time to time to avail themselves of in-service training. My right hon. Friend, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, is currently considering future arrangements for in-service training in the light of a report on the subject submitted last year by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers. That report drew attention to the variety of teachers' training needs, the different ways in which those needs might most effectively be met and the arbitrariness of any approach to a desirable level of provision based solely on assumptions about the rate at which teachers might be released from their schools to attend in-service training.

Higher Education Grants

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will introduce legislation to ensure that Ministry of Defence employees and their offspring will not be excluded from receiving higher education grants on the basis of residence abroad during the previous three years;

(2) if *(a)* Ministry of Defence employees and *(b)* their offspring on returning to the United Kingdom from abroad are entitled to a higher education grant irrespective of their posting over the previous three years.

Mr. Brooke: No. To be eligible to receive a mandatory award, an applicant must normally have been ordinarily resident in the British islands for the three years preceding the start of his course, but excluding any residence here wholly or mainly for the purposes of receiving full-time education. However, under the provisions of regulation 5(4) of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1984, an applicant may be treated as ordinarily resident where his local education authority decides that he has suspended his ordinary residence because he, his spouse or his parent or guardian has been temporarily employed abroad. These rules apply to all applicants regardless of the nature of the relevant employment. Eligibility for discretionary awards is a matter for each individual local education authority.

Children (Essential Boarding)

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's understanding of essential boarding need; and to what extent it is being met.

Mr. Dunn: Essential boarding need arises under section 52(1) (a) of the Education Act 1944, which places a duty on a local education authority to arrange for boarding, free of charge, for a pupil whom it considers could not otherwise be provided with an education suitable to his age ability and aptitude or special educational needs. As far as I am aware all local education authorities discharge this duty.

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a breakdown by local education authority of children considered in need of essential boarding.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected.

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that local authority provision to meet essential boarding need is equitable across the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend's responsibility on this subject extends only to England. A local education authority is under no duty to maintain its own boarding provision. Essential boarding need may be met also by taking up a boarding place in either a school maintained by another authority or an independent school.

Students (Fees)

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recommendations he has issued about fees for home students on courses of further and higher education in the academic year 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: For the academic year 1985-86 I have recommended the following fee levels for home students and for students from other European Community countries. Fees for 1984-85 are shown in brackets.

	£	£
Postgraduate courses	1,632	(1,569)
First degree and diploma courses	520	(500)

These recommended fees represent 4 per cent. increase over those for 1984-85.

Other fees for home and European Community students are the responsibility of the local education authorities. I understand that the Council of Local Education Authorities has recommended fees for 1985-86 as follows. Fees for 1984-85 are shown in brackets.

	*Advanced Further Education		Non-Advanced Further Education	
	£	£	£	£
Full-time	520	(500)	321	(309)
Sandwich/block release (weekly rate)	14·50	(13·90)	9·00	(8·60)
Part-time per course hour	0·50	(0·47)	0·30	(0·28)
Part-time annual fee for one session per week	£52·00	(50·00)	32·00	(31·00)

* Other than first degree and diploma courses.

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he proposes to issue recommendations about fees for students from outside the European Community in 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's policy is that students who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980 should pay fees that cover the cost of their education. The Government no longer imposes minimum fees on authorities or institutions, which are therefore free to determine the fee to be charged in accordance with the Government's policy, and in the light of their own circumstances.

I understand, however, that the University Grants Committee and the Council of Local Education Authorities have issued recommendations to universities and local education authorities respectively on the minimum fees that should be charged in 1985-86 to students paying the overseas rate of fee who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980. Their recommendations are as follows:

Universities

Such fees as universities consider necessary to meet the cost of the education in question, subject to the following minima. Recommended minima for 1984-85 are shown in brackets.

	1985-86 £	*(1984-85)* £
Arts courses	3,310	(3,150)
Science courses	4,350	(4,150)
Clinical courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science	8,050	(7,650)

Maintained and assisted institutions

Such fees as the local authorities and institutions consider necessary to meet the cost of the education in question, subject to the following minima. Recommended minima for 1984-85 are shown in brackets.

	1985-86 £	*(1984-85)* £
Advanced courses	3,310	(3,180)
Non-advanced courses	1,820	(1,750)

Any students still on courses that began before 1 September 1980 are still entitled to a subsidised rate of fee. Maximum fees for such students were specified in the Education (Fees and Awards) (Amendment) Regulations 1984. As there will be few, if any, such students left by 1985-86, I have decided not to revise the fee maxima further. They will therefore remain as follows:

	£
Postgraduate courses	2,148
First degree and other advanced courses	1,653
Full-time non-advanced courses	885

Church-aided Schools (Building Programme)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at current prices, in both capital and revenue terms, if a place in nursery education were to be provided in September 1985 for every child aged three and four years old; and what is his estimate of the cost if that were done for September 1988.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 February 1985, c. 298-99]: It is possible to estimate only to a very approximate order of magnitude, for the reasons given in my reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 6 December 1984 at column *94*; but the building costs, which would in practice have to be phased over a number of years, would probably be of the order, in aggregate, of £300 million to £400 million; the initial cost of training the extra teaching and nursery staff, which would also have to be phased, would probably be of the order of £100 million to £150 million (the level of continuing costs of training would depend on wastage rates); and the eventual annual recurrent cost (excluding training) would probably be of the order of £300 million to £350 million.

ENERGY

Atomic Energy Act 1954

40. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to amend the Atomic Energy Act 1954 to enable the authority to borrow in the financial markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As I said in my statement on 11 February, we intend to provide the authority with a capital structure and powers to borrow as required, so as to enable it to operate as a trading fund from April 1986, and will introduce legislation as soon as possible for this purpose.

Renewable Energy (Research and Development)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy what consequences he expects to flow from the proposed 40 per cent. cut in funding on the renewable energy research design and development programme.

Mr. David Hunt: My Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power (ACORD) will be considering the renewable technologies at its meeting on 12 March. The council will have before it a review of these technologies which is being prepared by the energy technologys support unit.

Advisory Council on Research and Development

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the current membership of the Advisory Council on Research and Development with details of those who have nominated the members; and how long each member has served on the Advisory Council on Research and Development.

Mr. David Hunt: The current membership of the Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power is as follows, with members' dates of appointment being shown in parentheses:

Chairman — Professor Sir Sam Edwards, FRS — chief scientific adviser, Department of Energy (1983).

Mr. J. R. Baker — managing director, mechanical group, Northern Engineering Industries plc (1984).

Mr. R. Bexon—deputy chairman, BP (1984).

Dr. T. Broom — director general of research, Central Electricity Generating Board (1981).

Mr. G. Clerehugh — director of research, British Gas Corporation (1983).

Dr. I. Dunstan — director of standards British Standards Institution (1985).

Professor Sir John Kingman — chairman, Scientific and Engineering Research Council (1981).

Dr. T. Marsham — full-time board member UKAEA and managing director, UKAEA, Risley (1974).

Professor L. Maunder—professor of mechanical engineering University of Newcastle upon Tyne (1981).

Mr. R. W. Orson—board member, The Electricity Council (1976).

Mr. R. Rawlinson — technical director, National Coal Board (1984).

Dr. L. E. J. Roberts — full-time board member UKAEA and director AERE, Harwell (1984).

Professor C. Robinson — professor of economics, University of Surrey (1981).

Dr. H. Rose—group technical director, Foseco Minsep plc (1975).

Dr. R. Telfer — director, Manchester Business School (1981).

Mr. K. Williams — industrial fellow, Churchill College, Cambridge (1982).

Of the above Dr. Broom, Mr. Clerehugh, Sir John Kingman, Dr. Marsham, Mr. Orson, Mr. Rawlinson and Dr. Roberts are nominees of their respective organisations. The remaining eight members are independent members appointed by the Secretary of State for Energy.

The Chief Scientific Adviser to the Cabinet Office, Sir Robin Nicholson, and the Chief Scientist and Engineer, Department of Trade and Industry, Mr. O. Roith, serve on the council as assessors. Sir Robin Nicholson was appointed in 1984. Mr. Roith was appointed in 1981 originally as a full member when employed by BP, becoming an assessor in 1982 following his move to the DTI.

EMPLOYMENT

Illegal Child Employment

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the enforcement by the Health and Safety Executive of legislation relating to children working part-time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Nevertheless, the Health and Safety Commission is reviewing the position.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980 for the city of Coventry *(a)* the total number of workers employed, *(b)* the share of jobs in (i) manufacturing industry, (ii) services and *(c)* losses or gains in the main sectors of employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The nearest available information on a consistent basis is from censuses of employment taken annually from 1971 to 1978 and, from 1978, triennially, and is as follows:

Employees in employment in the Coventry jobcentre area

	Total All industries and services (thousands)	*Percentage employed in: Manufacturing industries (per cent.)*	*Service industries (per cent.)*
June 1971	192·4	63·0	32·4
June 1975	192·3	59·3	36·9
June 1978	172·9	56·9	38·5
September 1981	146·3	46·6	48·9

Net changes in employment in the industries with the largest number of employees in the area between the dates given are as follows:

Standard Industrial Classification 1968	*Numbers at June 1971 thousands*	*Net changes 1971-1975 thousands*	*1975-1978 thousands*	*1978-1981 thousands*
Mechanical engineering	17·0	+2·6	−0·6	−3·4
Electrical engineering	18·4	−1·3	−4·0	+0·5
Vehicles	68·7	−8·4	−9·5	−25·3

Standard Industrial Classification 1968	Numbers at June 1971 thousands	Net changes 1971-1975 thousands	Net changes 1975-1978 thousands	Net changes 1978-1981 thousands
Metal goods not elsewhere specified	5·9	−0·8	+0·2	−0·8
Construction	5·3	−1·0	−0·0	−0·1
Transport and communication	6·1	−0·5	−0·7	−1·0
Distributive trades	14·7	+0·3	−0·3	−1·1
Insurance, banking, finance and business services	3·2	+0·7	+1·0	+1·8
Professional and scientific services	19·0	+4·4	−11·8	+6·0
Miscellaneous services	13·1	+2·7	−2·0	−0·2
Public administration and defence	6·2	+1·0	+9·6	−0·6

Careers Service

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what qualifications are accepted by his Department as professional qualifications allowing employment as a careers officer; and in what circumstances individuals who do not hold such qualifications are allowed to take up such employment.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Guidance issued to local education authorities under the Employment and Training Act 1973 states that authorities should make arrangements to enable newly recruited careers officers performing vocational guidance functions in schools and colleges to obtain the diploma in careers guidance within a reasonable period of time, unless they either already hold the diploma or an equivalent qualification approved by the Local Government Training Board or have previous service as a careers officer with a local education authority or the Department of Employment before 1 January 1982.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve provision for the in-service training of employment assistants to enable them to gain professional qualifications in careers guidance.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for local education authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are his plans for the future role of the careers service; how these plans will affect the manpower and resource requirements of the Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government will continue vigorously to pursue, in conjunction with local education authorities in England and Wales and education authorities in Scotland, their responsibilities for the effectiveness and efficiency of the careers service.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average case load of an employment assistant employed by the careers service.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available. Employment assistants carry out a number of tasks which vary from authority to authority and they do not normally have a personal case load of young people.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what information he has concerning the number and location of places currently available on block-release courses to enable employment assistants to qualify as careers officers without ceasing their employment;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of employment assistants employed in the careers service in each region who were able to gain professional qualifications in careers advice without terminating their employment in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown by region of the numbers of employees of careers services who are *(a)* specialist careers officers, *(b)* careers officers and *(c)* employment assistants.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The most recent information is set out in the following table.

	Regular careers service—number in post as at 1 October 1984		Unemployment specialist careers officers and employment assistants funded by the Department of Employment. Number in post as at 18 October 1984	
	Careers officers	Support staff*	Careers officers	Employment assistants
London	518½	416	39½	34½
South East	617½	537	76	73
South West	228	196¼	42	36
Midlands	577½	470¼	113	110½
Northern	196	177½	62	62
North West	432¼	318	105	97½
Yorkshire and Humberside	306½	236½	77½	76½

Note:

Part-time staff have been added together to the nearest whole number where possible.

* Separate figures for employment assistants are not readily available.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library the recent Manpower Services Commission memorandum dealing with accidents on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what instructions are given to Manpower Services Commission staff as to the information on the health and safety record of individual schemes and projects on the youth training scheme that may be given to the Commission's area manpower boards when they are considering those schemes and projects for renewal; whether details of particular accidents may be disclosed to area manpower boards in such circumstances; and whether

he is satisfied that area manpower boards can adequately fulfil their supervisory function on the basis of the information supplied;

(2) whether he will publish, for the Bradford area of the Manpower Services Commission, accident figures for the youth training scheme in the following form *(a)* for the area, for each of the last three available months, *(b)* by travel-to-work area, for the last available month if possible, *(c)* by parliamentary constituency, for the last available month if possible and *(d)* by local authority, for the last available month if possible;

(3) if he will place in the Library a copy of Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3 and 514/3 together with all supplements to these memoranda so far issued; what comparisons can be made between accident figures for the scheme and statistics published for the employed population generally by the Health and Safety Executive; and what instructions are given to Manpower Services Commission staff as to the comparisons that may be made;

(4) if he will publish for each available quarter since the inception of the youth training scheme the incidence rate of major and fatal accidents to trainees;

(5) whether, in circumstances where Manpower Services Commission staff reports to area manpower boards that a youth training scheme trainee has suffered an accident, there are standing instructions as to the form in which such information may be given, and, in particular, whether the information may be given orally or in writing;

(6) what details of severe and fatal accidents on the youth training scheme it is the practice of the Manpower Services Commission *(a)* to disclose and *(b)* not to disclose to (i) outside individuals and organisations and (ii) the Commission's area manpower boards; and what the reason is for disclosure or non-disclosure in each instance.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Members as soon as possible.

Skillcentres

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the Manpower Services Commission proposals to close certain skillcentres now that a majority of the Commission no longer supports the report on this subject known as MSC/66/84.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement on 21 February 1985 at column 1234.

Chemical Installations (Safety)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied that a disaster similar to that which occurred in Bhopal could not happen in Scotland; and if he will make a statement as to safety measures undertaken and in force.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Milk Quotas

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cutback in milk production in Northern Ireland since the implementation of milk quotas.

Dr. Boyson: The estimated cutback in the period from 2 April 1984 to 31 January 1985, compared with the same period in 1983-84, is 76·3 million litres (6·5 per cent.).

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the nationalised industries, non-governmental organisations and agencies for which his Department either has responsibility or provides funding, as well as those sections of his Department, which provide services to the general public or to private organisations; and if he will indicate separately those which at present: *(a)* charge no fees, *(b)* charge fees which do not fully cover the costs of providing those services, *(c)* charge fees which exactly cover the costs of providing those services and *(d)* charge fees which more than cover the costs of providing those services.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *582*]: There are no nationalised industries in Northern Ireland. Non-governmental organisations and agencies for which the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments either have responsibility, or provide funding the full costs of which exceed £100,000, are as follows:

(a) No charges are made
- Seed Potato Promotions Ltd
- Agriculture Research Institute
- Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd
- Village communities administered by the Glencraig Trust
- The Thomas Doran Training Centre
- Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland
- Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland
- Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland
- Labour Relations Agency
- Local Enterprise Development Unit
- Fire Authority for Northern Ireland
- Ulster Museum
- Northern Ireland Economic Council

(b) Charges do not fully cover costs
- Fisheries Conservancy Board
- Foyle Fisheries Commission
- Fishery Harbour Authority
- Pig Production Development Committee
- Northern Ireland Electricity Service
- Ulsterbus Ltd
- Citybus Ltd
- Northern Ireland Railways Ltd
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Planning Appeals Commission
- Northern Ireland Schools Examinations Council
- Sports Council for Northern Ireland
- Arts Council for Northern Ireland
- Ulster American Folk Park
- Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
- Armagh Planetarium

(c) Charges fully cover costs
- Milk Marketing Board
- Pigs Marketing Board
- Livestock Marketing Commission
- Northern Ireland Training Authority

(d) Charges more than cover costs
- Northern Ireland Airports Ltd

Comprehensive information about charges which may be made by the following is not immediately available
National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting
Northern Ireland Staff Council for the Health and Social Services
Northern Ireland Central Services Agency for the Health and Social Services Health Education Council
National Biologicaln Standards Board
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust
Joseph Rowntree Voluntary Trust
Northern Ireland Council for Social Services

Services provided to the general public or to private organisations by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments which cost more than £100,000 are as follows:

(a) No charges are made
Employment services including careers advice
Investigation of consumer and trade complaints
Monitoring of goods and services on offer for supply to the public
School transport
Social security administration machinery
Industrial Development Board — advisory service to industry

(b) Charges do not fully cover costs
Meat inspection and livestock improvement schemes
Forest recreation facilities
Angling development services
Potato marketing services
Industrial science including water testing
Inspection and testing of weights and measures equipment
Testing of gas meters
Roads service car-parking and ferry charges
Planning service (planning application fees)
Conservation branch (fees for recreational facilities in country parks)
Public Record Office
Water Service (metered water charges)
School meals
Library service
Personal social services
Hospitals, specialist and related services
Community health services
General dental services
General ophthalmic services
Pharmaceutical services
Public services training council
Police Authority—firearms certificates
Ordnance survey

(c) Charges fully cover costs
Pig carcase classification
Goods and accuracy tests on equipment
Companies and Friendly Societies Registry and the insolvency branch
Road service (works carried out at the request of individuals or other bodies)
Transport division (fees for vehicle testing, driver testing, issue of driving licences, issue of road freight and road service licences)
Water service connection charges and trade effluent charges
Development officer service issue of property certificates
Works service consultancy services
Use of certain education and library board facilities by certain groups, e.g. playing fields by youth groups
Provision of certified copies of birth, marriage and death certificates

(d) Charges more than cover cost
Land Registry
Registry of Deeds
Police Authority—Issue of accident reports

Strip Searches

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the complaints procedure within Northern Ireland prisons detailing how complaints arising out of strip searches are processed, with whom the complaint must be lodged; who investigates the complaint; what evidence is taken into consideration; what right of representation the complainant has; and who or what authority decides whether the complaint is upheld and whether action should be taken against a member of staff.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *541*]: Prisoners may make complaints about any matter relating to their treatment in prison to the governor, a member of the board of visitors, an officer of the Prison Department visiting the prison or by petition to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is for the governor to instigate an investigation which would normally be conducted by a senior member of management. If this investigation indicates that there has been a breach of discipline by a member of staff, a disciplinary charge would be laid under the code of discipline for prison officers. In more serious cases it would be referred to the Royal Ulster constabulary.

An adjudication of a charge under the code of discipline is conducted by the governor who in certain circumstances must refer the matter to the Northern Ireland Office for determination. All available evidence, including written statements and medical evidence, if appropriate, would be considered at the adjudication. The complainant does not have the right to be represented at the adjudication.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Officers (Deaths)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of those police officers killed on duty in England and Wales since 1965; what was the method of killing in each case; whether drugs or alcohol were a known feature in the behaviour of the assailant or assailants; what was the number of cases in which a suspect or suspects were subsequently *(a)* arrested and *(b)* brought to trial; and, in each case, where a conviction was secured, what was the nature of the sentence imposed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is given in the following table. Information on whether drugs or alcohol were a known feature in the behaviour of the suspects of these homicides could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Offences currently recorded as homicide where the victim was a police officer on duty
England and Wales 1965-1984

Year offence initially recorded	*Victim*	*Method of killing*	*Number of suspects*		*Offence of which convicted**	*Sentence*
			Arrested	*Tried*		
1965	PC G. W. M. Russell	Shooting	1	Unfit to plead	(Indicted for murder)	Hospital order without limit of time, Section 5 Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964
	DS J. Stanford	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Death—commuted to life imprisonment
1966	DS C. Tippett-Head	†Shooting	3	3	Murder	Life imprisonment
	DC D. S. Wombwell				Murder	Life imprisonment
	PC G. R. Fox				Murder	Life imprisonment
	PC B. Armstrong	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Detained HMP, Section 53 Children and Young Persons Act 1933
1967	Insp. J. R. Bradley	Run down by car	2	2	Other manslaughter	Both 8 years imprisonment
1969	PC M. J. Davies	Stabbing	1	1	Sec. 2 manslaughter	Hospital order with restrictions without limit of time, Sections 60/65 Mental Health Act 1959
1970	Insp. B. J. Taylor	Shooting	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1971	DC I Coward	Shooting	2	2	Murder	Both Life imprisonment
	Supt. G. I. Richardson	Shooting	5	5	Murder	Life imprisonment
					Other manslaughter	20 years imprisonment
					Robbery	15 years imprisonment
					Robbery	13 years imprisonment
					Robbery	10 years imprisonment
1972	PC P. C. Guthrie	Shooting	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1973	PC M. A. Whiting	Knocked from side of moving car	3	2	Other manslaughter	7 years imprisonment
					Other manslaughter	5 years detention, Section 53 Children and Young Persons Act 1933
	PC D. A. Smith	Shooting	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1974	PC J. Schofield	Shooting	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1975	PC S. A. Tibble	Shooting	—	—	—	—
	PC D. C. Green	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
	PS B. Dawson	Shooting	1	1	Sec. 2 manslaughter	Life imprisonment
1977	DC N. Garnham	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1978	PC C. J. McDonald	Struck with brick	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1979	PC D. D. Kellam	Struck with billhook	1	1	Other manslaughter	8 years imprisonment
1980	PC F. J. O'Neill	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
1981	PS M. Hawcroft	Stabbing	1	1	Murder	Detained HMP, Section 53 Children and Young Persons Act 1933
	PC R. Davenport	Dragged along by car	2	2	Other manslaughter	9 years imprisonment
1982	PC J Egerton	Stabbing	1	1	Acquitted	—
	DC J. B. Porter	Shooting	3	3	Murder	Life imprisonment
					Murder	Life imprisonment
					Other manslaughter	12 years imprisonment
					Robbery	5 years imprisonment
	PC J. Sandford	Struck with wheel brace	1	1	Murder	Life imprisonment
	PS D. T. Winter	Shooting	1‡	—	—	Suspect committed suicide
	PC D. I. Haigh	Shooting				
	WPC M. D. Rayner	Sitting in car struck by a caravanette	1	1	Other manslaughter	5 years imprisonment
1983	Insp. S. Dodd	†Explosive device	—	—	—	—
	PC N. Lane					
	WPC J. Arbuthnot					
1984‖	WPC Y. Fletcher	Shooting	—	—	—	—
	Acting PS B. J. Bishop	Shooting	1	Awaiting trial	—	—
	PS J. R. Speed	Shooting	—	—	—	—

* Including convictions for lessor offences than homicide.
† Same incident.
‡ Same suspect.
‖ Provisional.

Detention Orders

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people served with detention orders during 1983 and 1984 under paragraph 2, schedule 3, to the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested for 1983 and for the first nine months of 1984 was published in table 14 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics — Third Quarter, 1984" (Issue 27/84). Figures for the fourth quarter of 1984 will be published during the first half of March.

Deportation

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide a table indicating the total number of people served with notice of intention to deport during 1984 and 1983 by nationality and category.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested for 1983 is given in the following table. Figures for 1984 are not yet complete but I will provide them as soon as possible.

Notices of Intention to Deport Served, by Nationality and Category, 1983

Nationality	*Category**		*Number of persons*	
	s.3(5)(a)	*s.3(5)(b)*	*s.3(5)(c)*	*Total*
Commonwealth				
Antigua	4	—	—	4
Australia	17	1	—	18
Bahamas	3	—	—	3
Bangladesh	40	1	—	41
Barbados	3	—	—	3
Belize	2	—	—	2
Canada	1	—	—	1
Cyprus	141	1	2	144
Dominica	1	—	—	1
Ghana	338	—	1	339
Grenada	8	—	—	8
Guyana	16	2	—	18
Hong Kong (BDTC)	65	2	—	67
India	203	5	—	208
Jamaica	36	1	—	37
Kenya	10	—	—	10
Lesotho	1	—	—	1
Malaysia	57	—	—	57
Malta	6	—	—	6
Mauritius	46	1	3	50
Montserrat	2	—	—	2
New Zealand	9	2	—	11
Nigeria	329	15	—	344
Seychelles	9	—	—	9
Sierra Leone	28	1	—	29
Singapore	8	1	—	9
Sri Lanka	146	—	—	146
St. Christopher	1	—	—	1
St. Helena	1	—	—	1
St. Lucia	4	1	—	5
St. Vincent	2	—	—	2
Tanzania	15	—	—	15
Trinidad	5	—	—	5
West Indies Associated States	2	—	—	2
Uganda	5	—	—	5
Zambia	4	—	—	4
Zimbabwe	75	—	—	75
COMMONWEALTH TOTAL	1,643	34	6	1,683
Foreign				
Afghanistan	45	1	—	46
Argentina	7	—	—	7
Austria	5	—	—	5
Bahrain	1	—	—	1
Belgium	1	2	—	3
Benin	—	1	—	1
Bolivia	5	—	—	5
Brazil	13	—	—	13
Burma	4	—	—	4
Cambodia	2	—	—	2
Cameroons	1	—	—	1
Cape Verde	1	—	—	1
Chile	10	—	—	10
China	5	—	—	5
Colombia	76	—	—	76
Congo	1	—	—	1

Nationality	Category* s.3(5)(a)	s.3(5)(b)	Number of persons s.3(5)(c)	Total
Czechoslovakia	1	—	—	1
Dominican Republic	4	—	—	4
Ecuador	5	—	—	5
Egypt	175	1	—	176
El Salvador	1	—	—	1
Ethiopia	1	—	—	1
France	—	5	—	5
Germany (FRG)	2	8	—	10
Greece	15	—	—	15
Hungary	6	—	—	6
Indonesia	5	—	—	5
Iran	281	4	—	285
Iraq	57	1	—	58
Ireland	—	7	—	7
Israel	22	—	—	22
Italy	—	10	—	10
Ivory Coast	14	—	—	14
Japan	8	1	—	9
Jordan	17	—	—	17
Kuwait	1	—	—	1
Lebanon	5	1	—	6
Libya	24	—	—	24
Mexico	8	—	—	8
Morroco	39	2	—	41
Mozambique	4	—	—	4
Nepal	1	—	—	1
Netherlands	—	3	—	3
Norway	1	—	—	1
Oman	1	—	—	1
Pakistan	145	9	4	158
Panama	1	—	—	1
Peru	4	—	—	4
Philippines	42	—	—	42
Poland	3	—	—	3
Portugal	47	1	—	48
Qatar	1	1	—	2
Rumania	2	—	—	2
Saudi Arabia	8	1	—	9
Somalia	2	—	—	2
South Africa	24	2	—	26
Spain	35	2	—	37
Sudan	21	—	—	21
Sweden	—	2	—	2
Switzerland	4	—	—	4
Syria	9	—	—	9
Taiwan	1	—	—	1
Thailand	43	—	—	43
Tunisia	10	—	—	10
Turkey	185	3	—	188
United States of America	23	4	—	27
Venezuela	7	—	—	7
Yemen	3	2	—	5
Yugoslavia	12	1	—	13
Zaire	1	—	—	1
Stateless	2	1	—	3
FOREIGN TOTAL	1,510	76	4	1,590
ALL NATIONALITIES	3,153	110	10	3,273

* Section of the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were served with notice of intention to deport during 1984; and how many of these were at the same time served with detention orders.

Mr. Waddington: The currently available information relates to the first nine months of 1984, when 1,846 notices of intention to deport were served. The total number of person served with detention orders in the same period was published in table 13 of the quarterly Home Office statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics — Third Quarter, 1984" (Issue 27/84); s orders are almost always served at the same time notice of intention to deport.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Ho Department how many persons were recommended deportation with no custodial sentence during 1984, a of those, in how many cases the court directed release subject to conditions and *(b)* without conditions.

Mr. Waddington: The currently available information relates to the first nine months of 1984, when of the total of 303 such persons, the courts directed release of 87 subject to conditions and of 137 without conditions.

Immigration Statistics

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained under Immigration Act powers for a period of more than two months on completion of a custodial sentence during 1984.

Mr. Waddington: Forty-one persons who completed a custodial sentence in 1984 were so detained under deportation powers. I regret that similar information relating to illegal entrants is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons treated as illegal entrants who were granted temporary admission and release during 1984; and how many of these subsequently absconded.

Mr. Waddington: The numbers of persons against whom action as illegal entrants was commenced and who were temporarily released in the first three quarters of 1984 is given in table 13 of the quarterly Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third Quarter, 1984" (Issue 27/84). Figures for the fourth quarter of 1984 will be published during the first half of March. Information about absconding is not readily available for the first part of 1984; I will reply as soon as possible giving such figures as can be supplied.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of passengers granted temporary admission upon entry to the United Kingdom during 1984; and how many of these subsequently absconded.

Mr. Waddington: Eight thousand five hundred and twenty-seven of whom 187 are known subsequently to have absconded.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per day of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers in; *(a)* prison department establishments and *(b)* immigration service detention accommodation.

Mr. Waddington: The total cost per day of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers in prison department establishments is estimated at £34. The cost of Immigration Service detention centres is estimated at £115.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide, for the latest convenient date, a table indicating the number of persons detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers by category;

(2) if he will provide, for the latest convenient date, a table indicating the period of time spent in prison department establishments by persons detained under the Immigration Act powers, showing the number detained for one, two, three, four, five and six months, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: On 15 February 1985, 151 persons were so detained: 101 were detained under deportation powers, 44 as illegal entrants and 6 were passengers who had been refused leave to enter.

The information requested about the period of detention is as follows:

Not more than	*Number*
One month	81
Two months	30
Three months	20
Four months	6
Five months	5
Six months	1

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of passengers detained overnight under Immigration Act powers during 1984, by nationality.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not yet available for the whole of 1984. That for the first ten months of the year is as follows:

	Number
Afghanistan	3
Algeria	47
Antigua	2
Argentina	8
Australia	12
Austria	11
Bahamas	1
Bangladesh	127
Barbados	1
Benin	1
Bermuda	2
Bolivia	2
Brazil	12
British Overseas Citizens	3
Bulgaria	1
Cameroon	3
Canada	6
Cape Verde	1
Central African Republic	1
Chile	6
China	7
Columbia	50
Cuba	10
Cyprus	17
Denmark	1
Dominica	1
Ecuador	2
Egypt	6
Ethiopia	5
Finland	5
France	3
Gambia	41
West Germany	8
Ghana	612
Greece	14
Grenada	1
Guyana	3
Holland	4
Hong Kong	42
Hungary	2
Iceland	3
India	492
Indonesia	3
Iran	95
Iraq	29
Israel	94
Italy	5
Ivory Coast	6
Jamaica	11
Japan	2
Jordan	10
Kenya	15
Korea	21
Kuwait	1
Lebanon	17

	Number
Liberia	4
Libya	58
Malaysia	19
Mali	2
Malta	14
Mauritius	7
Mexica	9
Morocco	47
Mozambique	5
Nepal	3
New Zealand	4
Nicaragua	1
Nigeria	664
Norway	4
Oman	1
Pakistan	426
Peru	5
Philippines	63
Poland	18
Portugal	82
Romania	5
St. Lucia	1
Saudi Arabia	9
Senegal	2
Sierra Leone	17
Seychelles	1
Singapore	5
Somalia	4
South Africa	4
Spain	112
Sri Lanka	136
Sudan	11
Surinam	1
Sweden	11
Switzerland	9
Syria	19
Taiwan	1
Tanzania	11
Thailand	5
Togo	1
Tunisia	46
Turkey	118
Trinidad	1
Uganda	27
Uruguay	2
USA	109
USSR	2
Venezuela	4
Yemen	6
Yugoslavia	18
Zaire	1
Zambia	8
Zimbabwe	13
Nationality Doubtful	44

These figures do not include persons detained in Queen's Building, Heathrow. The statistics at this unit are kept in a different way and the information requested cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. In 1984, 4,879 persons were detained there for some period, not necessarily overnight.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average length of detention for those received into Prison Department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984;

(2) what was the total number of persons received into Prison Department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984 by (i) individual prison establishments and (ii) nationality.

Mr. Waddington: Information for 1984 will not become available until the summer. No information on nationality is available.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of S Home Department how many inmates of Her prisons are suffering, or have suffered from immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Mellor: There are at present no diagn of AIDS among inmates, nor have there been.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Department if Her Majesty's Government wi their practice that any certificates signed by Minister for the purposes of seeking exemption 27 of the Data Protection Act are automatically and subject to renewal on that Minister ceasi office.

Mr. Waddington: It is for a Minister of t (who must be a member of the Cabinet, the General or the Lord Advocate) to determine wh require to be exempt for the purpose of saf national security. The need for and scope of exemption will be kept under review.

A certificate is required only if any questi whether data are properly exempt under section such question arises the need for a certificate carefully considered at the time by the ap minister.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for t Department whether he is made aware of any c signed by another Cabinet Minister for the pu seeking exemption via section 27 of the Data P Act.

Mr. Waddington: Section 27 of the Data P Act 1984 provides that it will be for a Cabinet or the Attorney-General, or the Lord Adv determine in any particular case whether data are to be exempt for the purpose of safeguarding security, and to sign a certificate to that effect. hon. and learned Friend has no overall responsi such matters and would not, as a matter of co aware of such determinations or certificates.

Mr. Cohen: asked the Secretary of State for t Department whether the Registrar is made awar certificate signed by a Cabinet Minister for the pu seeking exemption via section 27 of the Data P Act.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to I gave to a similar question from the hon. Me Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 17 December at colum

Prisons (Strip Searches)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for th Department (1) how many strip searches have tak in prisons in Great Britain in each of the past fiv how many prisoners have been subjected to this se and how many of these were remand prisoners;

(2) what guidelines are issued to prison staff Britain regarding strip searches;

(3) what sanction there is against a member o staff who breaches the guidelines on strip searchi many complaints arising out of strip searches ha

made against prison staff in each of the past five years; and how many staff members have been reprimanded as a result of conduct during a strip search;

(4) if he has received any medical reports suggesting that prisoners have received physical, mental or nervous illness as a result of strip searching;

(5) at what level of authority individual strip searches are ordered or authorised; and whether such searches are ever conducted on a random basis.

Mr. Mellor: The following information relates to prison department establishments in England and Wales. Responsibility for establishments in Scotland rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

General provisions on searching are contained in rule 39 of the prison rules 1964 and rule 43 of both the youth custody centre rules 1983 and the detention centre rules 1983. These rules make it clear that prisoners (including remand prisoners) are to be searched on reception into a prison department establishment and subsequently as the governor thinks necessary.

Standing instructions provide that the search on reception should be a strip search, that strip searches should be carried out during routine cell searching, and that special strip searches when there is reason to suspect that a particular prisoner has prohibited articles on his person should be authorised by the governor, deputy governor or chief officer. The instructions also give detailed guidance about the way in which searches should be conducted. Information is not maintained about the number of strip searches carried out.

Prison officers are subject to a code of discipline that applies to all their conduct on duty and which provides for disciplinary sanctions ranging up to dismissal in very serious cases. Records are not kept centrally about the number, the grounds, or the outcome of complaints made against prison staff.

The Department has received no representations from prison medical officers that strip searches have been injurious to health.

Interception of Communications (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library his correspondence with the hon. Member for Bolsover concerning interception of communications of Mr. and Mrs. T. Wallis of Old School House, Clopton, Molesworth.

Mr. Brittan: I have arranged for a copy of the hon. Member's letter of 14 February, and of my reply of 22 February, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Faris Azzou

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to complete his review of the case of Mr. Faris Azzou and his United Kingdom residential permit.

Mr. Waddington: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Home Office (Incident)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the numbe of people arrested near the Home Office on Wednesday 2(February and the number who have been charged; an with what offences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissione of Police of the Metropolis that eight people were arreste near the Home Office on Wednesday 20 February. All o them were released without charge after being cautioned.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons Treaty (Verification)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals have now been tabled by Her Majesty's Government at the conference on disarmament at Geneva in respect of verification provisions under a chemical weapons treaty; what has been the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

China (Chemical and Biological Weapons)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any indication of China's capacity in respect of chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Luce: China is a party to the 1972 biological weapons convention which prohibits the development, production, stockpiling and acquisition or retention of biological and toxin weapons. On its accession to the BWC on 15 November 1984, China stated that it has not produced or possessed such weapons and will never do so in future.

China is also a party to the 1925 Geneva protocol banning the use of chemical weapons. China participates actively in the current negotiations at the Geneva conference on disarmament on a total world-wide ban of the development, manufacture and stock-piling of chemical weapons. We are not aware of any public statement by China about the possession of such weapons.

Chemical Weapons (Ban Treaty)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he has taken of the Soviet Union's concern about the effect of the chemical and biological weapon capability of China on the achievement of a global chemical weapons ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him earlier.

At the Geneva conference on disarmament, the consistent objective of our proposals on banning chemical weapons has been to assure full compliance. If the Soviet Union were to agree to an effective verification regime to ensure the banning of chemical weapons, the threat of or use of such weapons by signatories to the proposed treaty would be permanently removed.

Nigeria

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the application of human rights in Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Representations received have been few and concern individuals detained for an excessive period without being charged or brought to trial. Particular concern has been expressed about the case of Professor Ishaya Audu, the former Nigerian Minister of External Affairs. There have been encouraging recent developments: 250 persons detained without charge were released on 1 October 1984 and a further 144 on 1 January 1985.

Disarmament Conference, Geneva

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the progress of the discussions at the conference on disarmament in Geneva; and what action has been taken on the paper tabled on 12 July 1984 by the United Kingdom on verification on the non-diversion of certain civil chemicals into military stockpiles.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Derbyshire West (Mr. Parris) on 20 February at column *475*.

The working paper, tabled by the United Kingdom on 12 July 1984 on the monitoring of the manufacture by the civil chemical industry of certain hazardous chemicals to ensure their wholly innocent end use, has been widely welcomed at Geneva by all delegations including those of the socialist group. As part of our efforts to make progress on outstanding verification issues in 1985, I intend to introduce during my visit to the conference on disarmament on 12 March further proposals on how the monitoring arrangements envisaged in the earlier working paper should be applied in practice.

Ascension Island (Wild Cats)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to control or eradicate the wild cat population on Ascension Island.

Mr. Renton: The Cats (Ascension) Ordinance 1984 was introduced primarily to control the number of cats imported or brought to the island. A pest control officer has been appointed.

The United States base on Ascension is at present operating a control programme. The RAF is considering similar action.

Tristan da Cunha (Crayfish)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many inspections are made on crayfish catches at Tristan da Cunha; and if he will give details of the last occasion when a contravention of the regulations occurred.

Mr. Renton: The catches of all crayfish vessels are inspected by the Tristan fisheries officer prior to departure from Tristan da Cunha. Catches of island-based boats are also inspected each fishing day. The last contravention occurred on 4 January 1984, when undersized fish were found on the MV Tristania.

Decade for Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how
delegation Her Majesty's Government intend to se
United Nations decade for women convention at
what is the maximum numbr of people Her M
Government are entitled to send; and if he will
statement.

Mr. Renton: The composition of our delega
not yet been finally decided. It is likely to be simil
of our delegations to the two previous world con
of the United Nations decade for women, thou
may be some reduction in the number of su
officials. There is at present no formal limit to th
delegations nominated by participating countries.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for
and Commonwealth Affairs (1) why Her M
Government did not answer questions 3.2-3.3.3 of
D of part I of the United Nations end of decade for
questionnaire;

(2) if he will now answer questions 3.2-3.3.3 of
D of the United Nations end of decade for
questionnaire; if he will publish his answers; and i
make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We were unable to submit our re
questions 3.2-3.3.3 with our replies to the rest
questionnaire in February 1984 because some ad
research was needed to answer an earlier questio
section. A reply was, however, sent in July 1984.
arranged for a copy of our reply to section 3 to be
in the Library of the House.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

48. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of St
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the p
level of British aid to India for 1985 and
respectively.

Mr. Raison: For the current financial year I
gross aid to be about £135 million, including £25
provided under the aid and trade provision. The Est
for 1985-86 which will shortly be laid before Parl
will indicate the extent of our commitments for tha

Ethiopia

49. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of Sta
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list t
given by each of the European Economic Comm
countries to the Ethiopian famine relief for 1984;
information he has as to the amount of aid given
same period by each of the countries in the middle
and what discussions he has had with the Governme
oil-producing countries in the middle east concerni
current level of aid to Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Bilateral aid committed by Eur
Community members for Ethiopian famine relief in
totalled approximately £82 million: the breakdo
figures is as follows. I do not have comprehe
information for assistance provided by Middle

countries. I have had no bilateral discussions with middle east Governments concerning the current level of aid to Ethiopia.

Bilateral commitments made by the Community to Ethiopian famine relief in 1984

Member country	*Commitments* £ million*
Belgium	No bilateral assistance
Denmark	1·59 (DKR 22 million)
Federal Republic of Germany	27·73 (DM 105·114 million)
France	5·41 (Francs 63 million)
Greece	1·20 (DRS172 million)
Republic of Ireland	0·77 (IR£·9 million)
Italy	23·91 (Lira 56 billion)
Luxembourg	No bilateral assistance
The Netherlands	8·82 (Guilders 37·7 million)
United Kingdom	13·180

*Figures for disbursements in 1984 are not available.

51. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present situation in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Very many Ethiopians remain at risk and their number is being reassessed by the UN co-ordinator. Mr. Jansson told me on 12 February that grain supply shipments were secure until the end of May. Beyond that he expects another 600,000 tonnes to meet most needs until the end of the year.

Bangladesh

50. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to Bangladesh to combat the effects of floods.

Mr. Raison: Immediately after last summer's floods we provided disaster relief of £190,000 through the voluntary agencies. We agreed on 31 January to provide an additional £4 million for the purchase of wheat in support of the vulnerable group feeding programme, and expect to spend some £¼ million in support of rehabilitation work by non-governmental organisations.

Pakistan

52. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is being given by Her Majesty's Government to promote food production in Pakistan.

Mr. Raison: About 55 per cent. of our aid programme for Pakistan is devoted to the agricultural sector which benefits both food and non-food crops, like cotton. Our main concern has been with irrigation, drainage and salinity control, which directly affects the productivity of the land.

Sub-Saharan Africa

53. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now make further resources available to make possible a British contribution to the special fund for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: Her Majesty's Government have undertaken to earmark, for use in close support of the bank's special facility, disbursements of £15 million a year of bilateral aid in each of five years.

Telecommunications Projects

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution United Kingdom aid makes to telecommunications projects; and if he will review policy in the light of the report of the Independent Commission for Worldwide Telecommunications Development.

Mr. Raison: Precise figures of aid to telecommunications are not available, but during the period 1978 to 1982 £30·8 million in capital aid was provided for the whole field of communications. Aid funds are also used for technical cooperation and training scholarships in telecommunications and for the United Kingdom's share of multilateral aid, a portion of which goes to telecommunications.

The Overseas Development Administration is always ready to consider requests from aid recipient countries for assistance in telecommunications. The Government are examining the report of the Independent Commission for Worldwide Telecommunications Development.

St. Helena (Brewery)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there are any plans to brew lager beer on St. Helena.

Mr. Raison: The future of the St. Helena brewery is under review. The possibility of switching to lager production is one option which will be examined.

Sudan

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to the Sudan by the Minister for Overseas Development; and if he will evaluate the present and long term needs of that country in relation to British aid.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give an itemised list of British aid to Sudan over the last five years with a breakdown between capital and other projects; and between current and projected infrastructure projects.

Mr. Raison: The breakdown of British aid to Sudan over the last five years is as follows:

	1980 £000	*1981 £000*	*1982 £000*	*1983 £000*	*1984 £000*
ODA project aid	6,689	24,716	31,077	17,891	13,634
Programme aid	7,950	2,515	2,197	5,797	4,007
Other non-project aid	511	917	836	3,733	4,182
CDC project loans	729	29	180	53	176
Total financial aid	16,048	28,254	34,290	27,474	21,999
Personnel overseas	1,601	1,920	1,775	1,783	1,744
Students and trainees	832	757	1,129	1,004	1,094
Other TC	4,095	1,807	2,224	1,932	2,589
Total TC	6,528	4,484	5,128	4,720	5,427
Total aid	22,576	32,738	39,418	32,194	27,427

	1980 £000	1981 £000	1982 £000	1983 £000	1984 £000
Expenditure on ongoing infrastructure projects over the last four years has been:	—	19,486	28,662	15,368	10,920

It is not possible to give figures for projected infrastructure projects.

WALES

Ministers (Overnight Stays)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many overnight stays he and each of his Ministers made in Wales during the month of January.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I and my ministerial colleagues spend as much time in the Principality as we can, both on our public and private affairs.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received since 1 January concerning future cutbacks at the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth arising from the Government's most recent reduction in the three year budget for agricultural research and advisory services.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received two letters which express concern about the future of the Welsh plant breeding station.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the major schemes, expected to cost more than £350,000, included in the capital programme of the Welsh water authority since 1 January 1983.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for the Welsh water authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to permit the Welsh water authority to allow balances from over-achievement of its financial targets to be carried forward for application in future years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh water authority will be able to utilise its balances in 1985-86, as set out in the Water Authorities (Return on Assets) Order 1985, SI 1985 No. 78.

M4 (Safety Barrier)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what length of barrier was replaced on the M4 in Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of his Department's staff are *(a)* engaged in local government matters, *(b)* local government finance including rate support grants, capital controls, accounts, statistics and other aspects of finance; and what proportion of his staff engaged in activities in *(b)* are full-time.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is difficult in many cases to draw a precise line between staff who are concerned with local government matters to a significant degree and those whose involvement is minor. The following table shows the numbers of posts in some of the parts of my Department most concerned with local government matters:

	Number
Transport, highways and planning group	252½
Economic and regional policy group	65
Education group (including HMI)	111½
Housing, architects and surveyors, local authority social services and social work services divisions	82
Finance (local government) division	14½
Water and environmental protection division	6½

The main group of posts concerned with the matters listed at *(b)* are the 14½ posts in finance (local government) division, but other staff including statisticians and research officers are also involved to some extent.

Fourteen of the members of finance (local government) division are full-time and one is part-time.

SCOTLAND

Measles

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish children have been immunised against measles by school age.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. By the end of 1983 (the latest year for which complete figures are available) 56·5 per cent. of the number of children born in 1978 had been immunised against measles. The corresponding figure for children born in 1979 and immunised by the end of 1984 is estimated to be 60 per cent.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of measles have been registered in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: Notifications of measles in each of the past 10 years are as follows:

	Number
1975	5,619
1976	12,436
1977	8,626
1978	8,953
1979	10,234
1980	6,646
1981	4,698
1982	10,581
1983	6,193
1984	*4,919

* Provisional.

Hypothermia

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many causes of death in Scotland, in each of the past 10 years, have been ascribed or partly ascribed to hypothermia.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been some changes in recording practice over the years; so far as possible, the figures given below are consistent with current recording practice.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia as a cause Scotland, 1975-1984

	Number
1975	150
1976	228
1977	158
1978	205
1979	259
1980	199
1981	254
1982	196
1983	179
1984	*174

* Provisional.

Doctors

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of practising doctors per 1,000 population in Scotland and in each of the other European Economic Community countries and in the United States of America and Canada.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information on a broadly comparable basis is that published by the World Health Organisation in its 1983 volume of statistics. The figures quoted relate to 1980-81 or the nearest available year and, for some countries, may include dentists as well as doctors. The details are as follows:

	Number of physicians per 1,000 population
Scotland	1·82
Belgium	2·60
France	1·72
Federal Republic of Germany	2·27
Luxembourg	1·36
Netherlands	1·85
Greece	2·55
Italy	2·89
Denmark	2·07
Republic of Ireland	1·29
United Kingdom: England and Wales	1·41
United Kingdom: Northern Ireland	1·67
United States of America	1·82
Canada	1·82

Agricultural Advisory Service

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what the proposed reduction in the central Government funding to the Agricultural Advisory Service in Scotland will be in 1987-88, compared with the previous three years; and what effects the reduction will have on the level of service and advice given by the organisation.

Mr. John MacKay: Planned expenditure for the agricultural advisory services in Scotland in the years in questions are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	7·540
1985-86	7·771
1986-87	7·986
1987-88	4·786

The reduction in funding in 1987-88, which parallels a similar reduction in the funding of the agricultural advisory service provided in England and Wales, reflects the Government's aim that the industry should make a greater financial contribution towards the cost of the advisory services from which it benefits.

The effects of the reduction will depend on the outcome of current discussions with the Scottish agricultural colleges, which provide the advisory services in Scotland, and on the extent to which those who use these services are prepared to contribute towards their cost. I am confident, however, that the colleges will continue to provide a satisfactory level of service to farmers in Scotland.

AIDS

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if any people have died in Scotland from acquired immune deficiency syndrome; if any new cases have been reported; and what steps have been taken to provide resources to deal with the disease.

Mr. John MacKay: To date, four Scottish cases of AIDS have been reported to the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit; two of these patients have died, one in 1982, the other in 1984. In addition, a patient ordinarily resident in England died in Scotland in 1984. Existing resources should enable the appropriate authorities to deal adequately with this disease.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the nationalised industries, non-governmental organisations and agencies for which his Department either has responsibility or provides funding, as well as those sections of his Department which provide services to the general public or to private organisations; and if he will indicate separately those which at present: *(a)* charge no fees, *(b)* charge fees which do not fully cover the costs of providing those services, *(c)* charge fees which exactly cover the costs of providing those services and *(d)* charge fees which more than cover the costs of providing those services.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *583*]: The information is provided in the list. In view of the large number of services for which I am responsible either directly or through other bodies I have, in the interests of cost, restricted my answer for the most part to those services which cost more than £100,000 to provide and, for nationalised industries and the larger non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), have provided only a general description of the substantial range of specific services available. I have excluded voluntary bodies in the social work field, List D schools and grant-aided residential special schools since the services which they provide are not in general available to the public on direct application.

	Fee Code
NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES	
Civil Aviation Authority	
Airports	b
Scottish Transport Group	
Shipping (Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd)	b
Bus services (Scottish Bus Group)	b
Freight Haulage (MacBrayne Haulage Ltd)	d
South of Scotland Electricity Board	
North of Scotland Electricity Board	
Various services related to the supply of electricity	d
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND AGENCIES	
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	
Road safety services	b
Orkney Islands Shipping Company	
Shipping services	b
Loganair	
Air services	b
Colleges of Agriculture (3)	
General scientific and technical advice to farmers and growers	a
Course charges to students	b
Analytical and diagnostic services for farmers and growers	b
Preparation of plans on behalf of applications for Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme	c
Royal Botanic Garden	
General public amenity	a
Entry charges to satellite gardens	c
Colleges of Education (7)	
Educational services	b
Scottish Examination Board	
Examination charges	c
Scottish Technical Education Council	
Examinations and national certificate modules	b
Scottish Business Education Council	
Examinations and national certificate modules	b
Scottish Council for Educational Technology	
Film and video hire	b
Scottish Sports Council	
Provision of sports training and instructive courses at the National Sports Training Centre	b
Newbattle Abbey College	
Provision of diploma course	b
Provision of short courses	c
National Galleries of Scotland	
Public exhibition service	a
Entrance to special exhibitions	c
Royal Scottish Museum	
Public exhibition service	a
Entrance to special exhibitions	c
National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland	
Public exhibition service	a
Entrance to special exhibitions	c
National Library of Scotland	
Public exhibition service	a
Photocopying and conservation	c
Scottish Film Council	
Entrance charges to Glasgow Film Theatre	b
Sale of media education material	b
Rent of archive materials	c
Central Institutions (11)	
Courses for home students	b
Courses for overseas students	c
Provision of short courses	c
South of Scotland Electricity Consultative Council	
Consumer advisory services	a
North of Scotland Electricity Consultative Council	
Consumer advisory services	a
Highlands and Islands Development Board	
Provision of corporate finance, industrial premises and advisory services	a,b,c,d
Scottish Development Agency	
Provision of corporate finance, industrial premises and advisory services	a,b,c
Scottish Tourist Board	
Promotion of tourism, information and advisory services	b
New Town Development Corporations (5)	
Provision of rented housing and industrial premises	b,c,d
Health Boards (15)	
Hospital and Community Health Services	a,b,c
Common Services Agency	
Ambulance services	a,b,c
Supply of blood	a,b,c
SCOTTISH DEPARTMENTS	
Scottish Development Department	
Ancient Monuments	b
Planning permission and related appeals	a
Planning enforcement and related appeals	b
Erskine Bridge (tolled estuarial crossing)	b
Rent Registration Service (determination of rents)	a
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	
Statutory pre-crop soil sampling and testing for potato cyst nematode	a
Provision of phytosanitary certificates for exports of plants and plant products	a
Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme	b
Crofters Livestock Improvement Scheme	b
Seed certification, seed testing and related services	c
Administration of statutory schemes for certification and marketing of seed potatoes, bulbs and soft fruit plants	c
Scottish Home and Health Department	
Family Practitioner Services	a,b,c
Provision of surgical appliances for handicapped	b
Welfare food supplies	a,b
Courses at Scottish Police College for students from outwith Scotland	b
Scottish Courts Administration	
Civil court services	b
Criminal court services	a
General Register Office (Scotland)	

	Fee Code
Issue of extracts of entries in the register of births, deaths, marriages	c
Scottish Record Office	
Search room for inspection of records	b
Extract and copies of records	c
Registers of Scotland	
Provision of public registers for registration of legal documents	c

Note:
Fee code a = no fees charged
b = fees charged which do not fully cover the costs of services provided
c = fees charged to cover the costs of services provided
d = fees charged which more than cover the costs of services provided

TRANSPORT

London Regional Transport

7. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected financial surplus for London Regional Transport at the end of 1984-85.

Mr. Ridley: I gave full details of LRT's expected cash surplus, and the way it is to be applied by LRT, during the passage through this House of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill on 19 and 20 February.

Compensation

13. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the procedures and level of compensation paid to owners of property taken for road building or improvements.

Mrs. Chalker: I am aware of the recommendations about procedures and compensation made by the EDC in its report on major road construction. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and Environment have already announced that they expect to respond to that report by the spring.

British Rail (Catering)

14. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the privatisation of catering facilities on British Rail.

Mr. Ridley: I warmly welcome BR's decision to make competition for the provision of train and station catering the priority area for the application of its new criteria for the supply of support services. This is very good news for the consumer. I hope that many private catering firms will put proposals to BR.

Transport Bill

15. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Leicester city council concerning the recently published Transport Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a written representation from Leicester city council about the White Paper "Buses" and a response to my Department's consultation paper on the structure of district council bus operations.

16. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what improvement in off-peak bus services he expects as a result of the Transport Bill becoming law.

Mr. David Mitchell: Many off peak services are profitable or potentially profitable and on those I expect deregulation to lead to better services and lower fares. Where the market does not provide services without subsidy, competitive tendering by local authorities will achieve better value for money.

36. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from organisations representing bus users in rural areas following the publication of the Transport Bill.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received over 8,000 representations since the publication of the White Paper last July. A substantial proportion of the responses have been from representative bodies and individuals in rural areas.

Local Government Bill

17. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received concerning the impact of the Local Government Bill on the use of section 20 grants.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since I answered a similar question from the hon. Member on 3 December, at column 39, I have received a small number of further letters from hon. Members and others about this subject.

Disabled People

18. **Mr. Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having, and with what organisations, to ensure that disabled people can have effective mobility on public transport.

Mrs. Chalker: The transport needs of disabled people are a continuing priority for my Department. In addition to regular contact with my own panel of advisers on disability, I am in frequent touch with transport operators and authorities, and with disability organisations on this subject.

M40 Extension

19. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the present situation with regard to proposals to construct the M40 extension.

Mrs. Chalker: The order for the M40 extension of the M40 between Ardley and Warwick which was made last December is the subject of proceedings in the High Court, further progress on this section has to await the outcome of those proceedings.

On other parts of the route, the further consultations on a proposed modification to the short length between Ardley and Wendlebury are now complete. I shall announce a decision shortly; and for the section between Warwick and the M42 at Umberslade, draft side roads and compulsory purchase order are to be published in a few weeks.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

20. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had on the expected effect of deregulation of bus services in metropolitan areas; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 1 February at column *339*. Since then I have received several hundred further letters from members of the public in the metropolitan areas, many of them based on false assumptions concerning the Government's proposals.

Stansted-Heathrow Inquiries

21. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to indicate when a decision will be reach on the Stansted-Heathrow terminal five planning inquiries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Transport will announce their decisions as soon as possible, after careful consideration of the inspector's report and all the evidence before us.

A312 Hampton Hill

22. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect he expects the completion of the M25 between Reigate via the Leatherhead interchange to Wisley on the A3 to have on the level of traffic on the A312 at Hampton Hill.

Mrs. Chalker: Traffic forecasts prepared in 1978 pointed to a 10-15 per cent. reduction on the A312 at Hampton Hill following completion of the M25. Recent counts taken on the A309 just south of Hampton Court bridge indicate a 12 per cent. traffic reduction since the M25 opened between Chertsey and Wisley, which suggests that the 1978 forecasts may prove to be on the conservative side once further sections open. My hon. Friend's long-standing support for the M25 is proving to be well justified.

London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill

23. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill.

Mrs. Chalker: I have received three letters from members of the public one from London borough of Lambeth concerning the LRT (Amendment) Bill and my officials have met officers of the GLC to discuss technical issues arising from this piece of legislation.

Bus Services (Expansion)

24. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what expansion in bus services he expects from the passing of the Transport Bill into law.

Mr. David Mitchell: I expect more services and more passengers on the profitable routes. I also expect deregulation to sustain and stimulate services on many routes which are now only marginally profitable or loss making. Where the market does not provide services competitive tendering for subsidy will enable authorities to achieve better value for money.

Buses

25. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations on bus substitution he has received since the publication of the White Paper "Buses".

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend announced proposals for legislation on bus substitution services on 21 June 1984. Since then, we have received about 20 representations specifically related to the bus substitution proposals. There are also references to those proposals in a few of the representations we have received on the Buses White Paper.

M11 (Acoustic Fencing)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many metres of acoustic fencing have been erected along the M11 since its opening; and how many more are to be erected during the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: A total of 1,633 metres of acoustic fencing has been added to the 3,862 metres provided as part of the original motorway construction. There are no plans to erect any more.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the coal strike has had on British Rail's markets.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR estimate that to 16 February 1985 the coal strike has reduced their rail freight volume by over 71 million tonnes representing reduced freight receipts of £230 million.

"Stay Low" Campaign

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of the "Stay Low" Christmas drink-drive campaign; and when the research regarding the outcome of this campaign is scheduled for publication.

Mrs. Chalker: The total cost of this campaign including research was £1·22 million. A full assessment on the effects of the campaign requires analysis of accident and casualty figures as well as the results of our attitude research among the 16 to 19-year-old target audience. This information should be available in the spring.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average annual daily flow of motor vehicles, showing heavy goods vehicles as a separate category, on the Ashford bypass section of the A20 and the Newmarket bypass section of the M11.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Average Annual Daily Flow 1983

	All motor vehicles	*Heavy goods vehicles*
Ashford bypass (M20 section junctions 9-10)	9,000	900

	All motor vehicles	Heavy goods vehicles
Newmarket bypass (A45)	26,000	5,900

The heavy goods vehicle category includes all commercial vehicles of more than 30 cwt. unladen weight.

Pensions (Free Travel)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those local authorities which currently grant free travel to pensioners.

Mr. David Mitchell: Concessionary fare schemes are for individual local authorities to decide and they are not required to send the Department details of the provision they make.

Wheel Clamps

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached a decision on the future of the experimental use of wheel clamps in central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Following my consultation with those concerned last year, I received many useful comments on the wheel clamp scheme. There was general support for continuing the scheme in central London for at least a further period in order to establish how longlasting the effects will be. I have therefore today laid before the House an order continuing the use of wheel clamps in central London for a further two years. This will enable the effects of the system to be further assessed. It will continue to be the practice to tow away vehicles dangerously or obstructively parked rather than to clamp them.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Braking Systems)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the benefits of anti-lock braking systems in reducing accidents involving heavy goods vehicles; and if he intends to introduce regulations requiring their fitment to such vehicles.

Mr. Chalker: Anti-lock braking systems are now being fitted to the majority of new heavy trailers, and this should result in a reduction in certain types of accident involving heavy articulated vehicles. Legal requirements for vehicle braking systems are laid down in a European Community directive which at present does not specify anti-lock. Changes to the directive are under discussion which may lead to more widespread use of anti-lock and requirements that it should be fitted to certain categories of heavy vehicle.

Helicopters

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what allowance is made for the higher levels of noise and vibration experienced in helicopters as opposed to fixed wing aircraft in establishing satisfactory flight-time limitation regulations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for regulating the flying and duty hours performed by helicopter pilots, advised by a panel which includes independent experts. No allowance is made for the greater noise and vibration characteristic of helicopters in the present flight time limitation regulations. However, the CAA is currently reviewing the causes (including noise and vibration) of fatigue in helicopter pilots, and whether any change to the flight time limitations is called for.

Dangerous Substances

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities and what expenditure has been provided in each year since 1981, by his Department, to ensure that drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous substances are trained in accordance with regulation 21 of the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 (S.I., 1981, No. 1059).

Mr. Ridley: The regulation places the responsibility for ensuring that drivers are adequately trained on the operators of vehicles.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* drivers, *(b)* operators of vehicles and *(c)* operators of tank containers have been prosecuted under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 (S.I., 1981, No. 1059) in each year since its implementation.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that there was one successful prosecution in 1983 and two in 1984 by the Factory Inspectorate for offences by vehicle operators in premises for which they are the enforcement authority. There is no central record of prosecutions by other enforcement authorities.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff have been employed by Her Majesty's Government to enforce the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 (S.I., 1981, No. 1059) in each year since its implementation.

Mr. Ridley: The regulations are made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and enforcement in premises to which the Act applies is the responsibility of either the Health and Safety Executive or the local authority as specified in the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1977. Enforcement on the road is the responsibility of chief officers of police. All HSE inspectors can enforce the regulations in premises for which HSE is the enforcing authority.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the penalties applying to the driver, the operator of the vehicle, and the operator of the tank container, respectively, for breach of each of the regulations described in the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 (S.I., 1981, No. 1059).

Mr. Ridley: I understand that the penalties for any offence under the Regulations are the same as for any regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. By virtue of section 33(3) of that Act and the Criminal Penalties (Increases) Order 1984, the maximum fine that may be imposed following conviction in a magistrates court is £2,000 but following conviction on indictment there can be an unlimited fine.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the amendments to the labelling requirements for lorries carrying dangerous substances to be enforced from 1 May to be published; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Ridley: All the amendments to the European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods (known as the "ADR" agreement) that come into effect on 1 May were published by the Stationery Office in January.

Safety Barriers

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of accidents involving deaths and involving injury to maintenance workers engaged in servicing and repairing safety barriers on United Kingdom roads for each year for the past five years.

Mrs. Chalker: This information is not collected on accident report forms, so I regret that the required figures are not available.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the report of the Anglo-French study group on the Channel tunnel as soon as he receives it.

Mr. Ridley: The remit of the Anglo-French study group is to advise Ministers on guidelines for prospective promoters. When its report is submitted I will need to consider the draft guidelines with my French counterpart. I will of course ensure that the agreed guidelines are made available to hon. Members; I can not say now precisely when and how.

35. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government that any Channel tunnel should be financed entirely from private funds without any aid or guarantees from public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question is yes: this applies to any form of fixed link. As to the second part of the question, I will make a statement at the appropriate time.

National Travel Survey

Sir Philip Goodhart asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether data concerning the mileage driven by drivers over 65 years of age will be collected as part of the 1985-86 national travel survey.

Mrs. Chalker: The 1985-86 national travel survey will be able to provide an estimate of weekly mileage driven by drivers over 65 years of age.

Drivers (Accident Statistics)

Sir Philip Goodhart asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will now publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the rate of drivers' involvement in accidents, per 1,000 licence holders, for drivers in the 17 to 19, 20 to 24, 25 to 28, 29 to 34, 35 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 69, and over 70 years age groups;

(2) what is the number of car driving licence holders in the age groups 65 to 69, 70 to 74, 75 to 79, and over 80 years, and the number of drivers in these age groups who were involved in accidents in 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Privatisation

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current estimated savings by his Department for 1984-85 as a result of privatisation schemes.

Mr. Ridley: There have been no privatisation schemes (other than in relation to nationalised industries) as such in my Department in 1984-85. However, contracting out of some functions—notably vehicle relicensing work to the Post Office — will save my Department approximately £10·5 million in 1984-85. We are pursuing other opportunities for contracting out.

First Class Passengers (Dining Facilities)

26. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has discussed the British Rail plan, allowing only first class passengers to use dining cars, with the chairman of British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: These are entirely matters of day-to-day management for British Rail. However, I understand that dining cars are at present open to all ticket holders except on eight trains a day where demand exceeds seat availability and priority is given to first class passengers. For the longer-term I understand that BR is thinking of replacing dining cars with at-seat trolley services. These would start, at first experimentally, on the west coast main line later this year, serving meals at seats in most first class coaches, and drinks and cold food to other coaches. Buffet cars would continue to serve hot food.

London to Norwich Line

27. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss investment in the London to Norwich line.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to discuss this matter with the chairman at present. Electrification of the line is proceeding.

Road Safety

28. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further proposals he has to improve road safety.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall be considering carefully the scope for further action in the light of the recently published report of the Transport Committee and, in due course, of the Government's own review of road safety policy currently in hand.

Airport Inquiries (Report)

29. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the report of the inspector on the airport inquiries 1981 to 1983.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames).

Local Government Reform

30. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect he expects the abolition of the metropolitan counties to have on the uptake of section 20 grants.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott).

Dartford Tunnel

31. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received concerning the pressure of traffic flows in the Dartford tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since I replied to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 19 June 1984 at column *93*, I have received 14 letters from hon. Members. In addition, letters have also been received from eight members of the public, the chairman of the Dartford tunnel joint committee and the clerk to the Essex county council. Traffic flows at the tunnel were discussed when I visited the tunnel on 15 August 1984, when I received a deputation led by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 20 November 1984, and when officials from my Department met the county surveyors of Kent and Essex together with officials of the tunnel joint committee on 4 February 1985.

Conditions can be expected to improve when new toll booths come into operation later this year and again when work to improve the approach roads is completed in Spring 1987. I am, however, very conscious of the role of the tunnel as a crucial link in the M25. Consultants have therefore been retained to investigate traffic flows so that we may prepare to take any necessary decisions in good time.

Airline Passengers (Statistics)

32. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected growth in scheduled airline passengers for flights within the United Kingdom for 1985 over 1984.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department does not produce short-term forecasts for passenger traffic. However, the Department's latest long-term forecasts assume that domestic passenger movements will increase by between 2·4 and 5 per cent. per annum in the period 1982 to 1990. (table 2, Air Traffic Forecasts for the United Kingdom 1984). A copy of these forecasts is in the Library of the House.

Handicapped People (LRT)

33. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will discuss the provision of facilities by the board for the handicapped.

Mrs. Chalker: Transport provision for disabled people was among the matters under discussion when I last met the chairman of LRT, and I expect it to be a frequent item for discussion at future meetings.

London Regional Transport (Board Membership)

34. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any of the current members of the board of London Regional Transport were nominated by or on behalf of any London borough.

Mrs. Chalker: No. The London Regional Transport Act requires my right hon. Friend to appoint members of the board of London Regional Transport from among persons who appear to him to have had wide experience of, and shown capability in, Transport, industrial commercial or financial matters, administration, applied science, or the organisation of workers.

Articulated Lorries

37. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the number of road accidents caused by the jack-knifing of articulated lorries, he will introduce legislation to make the fitment of anti-jack-knifing mechanisms mandatory.

Mrs. Chalker: Jack-knifing is a form of braking instability which occurs in about 3 per cent. of heavy goods vehicle injury accidents. To overcome it, efforts have been concentrated on setting a braking stability performance standard.

Such a standard is included in the EC braking directives which became mandatory in the United Kingdom for all new vehicles from 1 October 1982. The practical effect is that articulated goods vehicles have to be fitted with anti jack-knifing mechanisms such as load sensing brake valves of wheel anti-lock devices.

M25 (Epping Forest)

38. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps were taken to inform those affected in the Epping Forest district of Essex of their right to claim compensation on account of the M25 and the procedure for so doing.

Mrs. Chalker: Public notices, display advertisements and information from the Department's press releases appeared in local newspapers in March 1984 and again on 7 and 8 February 1985 advising those affected about their rights to claim compensation and the procedure for doing so. Explanatory booklets have been sent to all those residents who have written to my Department.

My hon. Friend will be interested to know that we have already received more than 200 claims for this section of motorway.

Through Booking Facilities

39. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, before privatising any more publicly owned assets in the transport sector, he will make it a condition of the contract that through booking facilities must be maintained.

Mr. Ridley: No. It would be a matter for the commercial judgment of the transport operators concerned, taking full account of the wishes of their customers.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Civil Service what information he has as to how many civil servants have left the Civil Service for jobs in the private sector in each of the last ten years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the figures for the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 *(a)* for the cost of the Civil Service and *(b)* the average cost for each civil servant; and if he will break down the average cost for each civil servant into pay, national insurance, superannuation, and other costs, such as office space, heating, lighting, car allowance, travel allowance, telephone, and so on.

Mr. Hayhoe: In my answers of 18 January 1982, at column *79*, and 19 November 1982 at column *296* I provided my hon. Friend with figures for 1980-81 and 1981-82. Figures for the 1979-80 financial year are not available in the form requested. The figures for 1982-83 and 1983-84 are shown below, but figures on the same basis for 1984-85 are not yet available.

The averages can be derived from departmental running costs of £15,197 million in 1982-83 — [Vol. 47, c. 76-78]—and £16,050 million in 1983-84—[Vol. 68, c. 271-273]. The staff totals used to calculate the averages are:

	1 April 1983	*1 April 1984*
Civil Service (excluding trading funds)	623,000	599,400
Armed Forces	320,600	325,900
Northern Ireland Civil Service	25,800	25,100

As I explained in providing the 1981-82 figures, information on Civil Service and Armed Forces is not held seperately.

	1982-83 £
Wages and salaries	10,757
Personnel overheads	847
Accommodation and rents	2,480
Office services	725
Other services	867
TOTAL	15,676

Public Services

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor Exchequer how many people were working in the N Health Service, local government and the Civil Se the years 1970, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 an what was the total public expenditure on these serv each of those years; and if he will publish these co numbers both as a total and broken down between th factors.

Mr. Peter Rees: I draw the attention of my hon. to the written answers given to him on 31 Jan columns *312* and *313* and 11 January 1985 at colum Public expenditure figures for 1979-80 to date ar in the White Paper, "The Government's Expe Plans, 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd 9428). Figu 1970 are not available on the same definitions. sector employment figures are published annu "Economic Trends" and its annual supplement.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor Exchequer what has been the vehicle excise duty private motor cars and *(b)* commercial vehicles in the last 10 years; and what has been the total revenu each source in each of those years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have as soon as possible.

Fuel Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor Exchequer what has been the duty on *(a)* petrol diesel per gallon in each of the last 10 years; and w been the total annual revenue from each source in those years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

Year	*Date of change*	*Duty (pence per gallon)* *Petrol*	*Diesel*	*Revenue (£ million)* *Petrol*
1974-75		22·5	22·5	1,101
1975-76		22·5	22·5	1,102
1976-77	9 April 1976	30·0	30·0	1,517
	29 March 1977	35·0	35·0	
1977-78	8 August 1977	30·0	35·0	1,666
1978-79		30·0	35·0	1,654
1979-80	12 June 1979	36·8	41·8	1.978
	26 March 1980	45·5	45·5	
1980-81	10 March 1981	62·8	62·8	2,619
1981-82	2 July 1981	62·8	54·1	3,555
	9 March 1982	70·6	60·2	
1982-83	15 March 1983	74·1	62·8	4,044
1983-84	13 March 1984	78·0	65·8	4,340

Value Added Tax

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the value added tax on a gallon of *(a)* petrol and *(b)* diesel in each of the last 10 years; and what has been the total revenue from each source in each of those years.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will specify how the imposition, rate and revenue from value added tax in the United Kingdom differs from each of the other members of the European Community;

(2) if he will list all the representations received against any further extension of value added tax on *(a)* books, *(b)* newspapers and periodicals and *(c)* newspaper advertising.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

Extra-Statutory Concessions

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish a list of extra-statutory concessions which he has introduced since May 1979;

(2) whether he will consolidate all Her Majesty's Customs and Excise extra-statutory concessions into one publication, specifying in each case the fiscal year in which each concession was introduced;

(3) whether he will consolidate all Inland Revenue extra-statutory concessions into one publication, specifying in each case the fiscal year in which each concession was introduced.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Lump Sum Pensions (Taxation)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the representations received against taxing lump sum pensions.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Revenue Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation, including excise and other duties in each of the last six fiscal years revalued at current prices.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many couples have elected for separate taxation and assessment in each of the years since this option was introduced.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many companies have paid corporation tax of over *(a)* £100,000, *(b)* £500,000, *(c)* £1 million and *(d)* £5 million in each of the last five fiscal years;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* gross trading profits and *(b)* net trading profits was paid by all industries in corporation tax for each of the last 10 years;

(3) what percentage of net trading profits was paid in corporation tax by *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* energy and water supply, *(c)* extraction and chemicals, *(d)* metal goods and engineering and *(e)* other manufacturing industries in the last fiscal year for which statistics are available;

(4) what percentage of net trading profits was paid in corporation tax by *(a)* construction, *(b)* distribution and repairs, *(c)* hotels and catering, *(d)* transport and communications, *(e)* banking, finance and insurance, *(f)* business services, *(g)* other services and *(h)* overseas industries in the last fiscal year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

North Sea Oil (Revenue)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the revenue from North sea oil operations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Gross Domestic Product (Taxation)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the total tax taken as a proportion of gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inflation

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

European Community (Own Resources)

Mr. William Powell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Commission has requested overdraft facilities on its own resources (No. 1) account in the United Kingdom and other member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Article 12(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77 of 19 December 1977 empowers the Commission, in certain circumstances, to draw in excess of the total assets in its accounts in member states. The facility can be used only to meet legitimate expenditure commitments within the appropriations in the Budget, or as at present, within the provisional twelfths regime. Repayment of any overdraft will be made by deduction from the next available own resources payment into the EEC No. 1 account. Use of this facility thus does not add to the total amount that the Community is already authorised to spend in 1985.

The Commission has informed member states that it now needs to use this facility. The Government have

satisfied themselves that use of the facility would comply with the provisions of Community and United Kingdom law and that the necessary payments are an obligation to be met by a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Private Health Insurance (Tax Allowance)

Mr. Gregory asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much income tax yield was forgone as a result of private health insurance tax offset allowance in the 1982-83 and 1983-84 tax years; and if he will give an estimate for 1984-85;

(2) if he will estimate income tax yields in 1985-86 if the private health insurance tax allowance *(a)* remains at its present level, *(b)* is index-linked, *(c)* is increased by 50 per cent. and *(d)* is increased by 100 per cent.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 21 February 1985, c. *571*]: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the £8,500 earnings threshold below which employees are not generally taxable on benefits in kind provided by reason of their employment. These rules have applied since 1982-83 to private health care insurance. The revenue cost in respect of employees below the limit is estimated at £4 million for 1982-83 and £5 million for 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Income tax is chargeable on the benefit of medical insurance provided by the employer for directors and those employees above the threshold. For 1985-86 the yield, corresponding to various levels of the earnings threshold is estimated as follows:

	(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*
Earnings threshold (£ per year)	8,500	8,900	12,750	17,000
Yield (£ million)	20	20	17	14

Income Tax

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor Exchequer by how much the estimated full-year income tax would be reduced if the tax thresho married man in a one-earner household were r equal the normal supplementary benefit m assuming two school-age children.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 Februar c. *434*]: If the non-aged married man's tax allowa 1985-86 was set at the current level of the supple benefit ordinary scale rate for a married man w children (one under 11 and one aged 11 to 15), th revenue cost on top of statutory indexation would b £1 billion in a full year. If the other main allowanc raised in ine with the married man's allowan additional cost (on top of indexation) wo approximately £870 million.

ENVIRONMENT

Nottingham (Grants)

Mr. Bradon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State Environment (1) what grants, inclusive of special have been approved for the City of Nottingham in th 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) what grants, inclusive of special grants, ha approved for the Nottinghamshire county council years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1

Mr. Waldegrave: The available information i in the table. The figures for specific grants includ programme grants and derelict land grant, whic previously been interpreted as "special grants".

Central Government Grants and Subsidies to Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council

£ milli

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Nottinghamshire County Council						
Rate support grants*	90·6	108·3	171·7	161·3	153·2	167·7
Specific grants†	26·3	31·4	37·0	38·7	44·9	—
Transport supplementary grant‡	1·1	0·3	1·0	3·0	2·6	2·7
Capital grants	0·5	3·0	1·9	0·7	1·6	—
Total	118·5	143·0	211·6	203·7	202·3	—
Nottingham City Council						
Rate support grant*	16·8	18·5	11·2	11·7	13·4	13·1
Specific grants†	3·9	4·1	4·1	5·1	10·9	—
Rent and rate rebates and housing benefit‡¶	3·8	4·4	5·2	11·7	30·7	33·2
Housing subsidy‡	11·3	12·8	5·2	—	—	—
Capital grants‖	1·1	2·2	5·4	4·4	2·5	—
Total	36·9	42·0	31·1	32·9	57·5	—

Notes:

* The rate support grant system changed in 1981-82. Figures for earlier years are not on a comparable basis. The figures for 1979-80 and include the needs and resources elements for the county council, and additionally the domestic element for the city council. Thereafter they co grant for both councils and additionally domestic rate relief grant for the city council. The figures up to 1981-82 are final entitlements. Those for to 1984-85 are latest estimates after holdback. The figures for 1985-86 are estimates assuming that the authorities spend at target.

† Grants under the urban programme and derelict land grant are included in these figures which are derived from the authorities' outturn data. E are not available for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

‡ Estimates are not available for 1985-86.

‖ Estimates are not available for 1984-85 or 1985-86.

¶ The figures for 1979-80 to 1981-82 cover rent and rate rebates grants paid by the DOE. In 1982-83 some payments of rent and rate rebat were also made by the DHSS. The figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 cover housing benefits grants paid by DHSS and are provisional.

Local Authority Staff (Pay)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North on 30 January, *Official Report*, column 175-76, if he will give details of the aggregate pay bill for local government white collar and manual employees, including teachers, lecturers, police and firemen, for each of the years 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. Waldegrave: The available estimates are:

Total employee costs—Local Authorities in England

	£ million
1978-79	9,100
1979-80	10,800
1980-81	13,300
1981-82	14,800
1982-83	15,800
1983-84	16,900

Note:
Total employee costs include wages and salaries, employers contributions to national insurance and superannuation, cash allowances and compensation for loss of office.

Olympic Games

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had about holding the 1992 Olympic Games in the United Kingdom; and if he has offered any financial resources.

Mr. Macfarlane: Bids for staging the Olympic Games are the responsibility of the British Olympic Association and interested cities. In a recent meeting I asked BOA officers for their assessment of the future prospects of staging the Games in this country; I understand they are currently considering whether or not a bid could be developed for 1992 or a subsequent year. No offer of financial resources has been made.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he intends to consult relevant bodies about the level of commercial sponsorship that would be appropriate if the Olympics Games are held in London in 1992;

(2) which sporting organisations, which local authorities and which of the local authority associations he intends to consult concerning the proposal to hold the Olympic Games in London in 1992.

Mr. Macfarlane: Any consultations about staging the Olympic Games in this country in 1992 or subsequent years would be for the British Olympic Association and the city concerned.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) today.

Water Authorities (Capital Programme)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the major schemes, expected to cost more than £350,000, included in the capital programme of each of the English water authorities since 1 January 1983.

Mr. Macfarlane: The hon. Member should write to the chairman of each authority for this information as full details are not kept centrally.

Defective Houses (Mortgages)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he now expects agreement to be concluded between his Department the National House Building Council and the building societies on repair schemes for houses designated under the Housing Defects Act which will guarantee future mortgageability.

Mr. Gow: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 20 February at column *485*.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding his decision to reduce the amount of capital receipts which local authorities can spend.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Members for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) and Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 6 February 1985 at column *618*.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of the moneys which they have been entitled to spend under: *(a)* section 137 and *(b)* section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 have been spent in each of the last six years by (i) the Greater London council, (ii) each of the London borough councils, (iii) the Common Council of the City of London, (iv) each of the metropolitan county councils and (v) each of the metropolitan district councils;

(2) what are the sums which *(a)* the Greater London council, *(b)* each of the London borough councils, *(c)* the Common Council of the City of London, *(d)* each of the metropolitan county councils and *(e)* each of the metropolitan district councils have been entitled to spend under (i) section 137 and (ii) section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 during each of the last six years.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Map Amendment Orders

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of how many definitive map amendment order objections have been received, since the Wildlife and Countryside Act came into force; how many are still outstanding; and what is the currently envisaged timetable for dealing with outstanding cases.

Mr. Waldegrave: Twenty three opposed definitive map modification orders have been submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by county surveying authorities since the Wildlife and Countryside Act came into force. 18 are outstanding at the present time.

The outstanding orders are in varying stages of processing, and in several cases the local inquiry has been arranged. One of the decision letters will be issued shortly, and the remainder will be issued as quickly as possible.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of Exchequer

contributions towards expenditure on home improvement grants paid by Southampton city council for each of the last 10 years.

Sir George Young: Southampton city council's entitlement to Exchequer contribution towards their expenditure on home improvement grants from 1975-76 onwards was:

(£000 cash)

Year	*Amount*
1975-76	233·5
1976-77	305·5
1977-78	325·1
1978-79	356·0
1979-80	410·7
1980-81	485·2
1981-82	529·8
1982-83	760·3
1983-84	*1098·5
1984-85	*1322·8

* Provisional figures subject to adjustment when audited final claims are received.

Mortgages

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, in respect of each local authority, and for each year since 1979, regarding *(a)* the number of mortgages granted, *(b)* the number of mortgages in respect of which payments have been rescheduled and *(c)* the number of cases in which an authority has repossessed a property on which it had advanced a mortgage.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *332*]: I have today placed in the Library tables showing figures for financial years from 197 1983-84, for each English local authority, of (i) mo granted to purchasers of council dwellings (info available only from 1980-81), (ii) other mortgages to private persons purchasing or improving dwellin (iii) dwellings mortgaged to the authorities whi repossessed. No figures on the re-schedul repayments on mortgages are available to the Depa

SOCIAL SERVICES

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* showing the present pay scales for all grades of together with the comparable value at today's price scales in being in each year since 1975.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member has as his base year 1975 which was exceptional and w therefore frequently used by those trying to u increase in nursing salaries. The Government accept that nursing pay should be based on historica still less at levels set in any one year. So I would u hon. Member not to attach excessive significance figures he seeks.

However the table shows, for all the main nursi grades, the basic salary maxima for the years 1 1984, revalued at December 1984 prices. It exclu new management grades established for the restructuring of the National Health Service. The also exclude the effect of the reduction in nurses' w hours in 1980/81, equivalent to a further increase per cent. on basic pay.

Basic salary maxima—at December 1984 prices (£)

Main Grade	*1 April 1975*	*1 April 1976*	*1 April 1977*	*1 April 1978*	*1 April 1979*	*1 April 1980*	*1 April 1981*	*23 August 1982*	*1 April 1984*
Regional Nursing Officer —RI	25,759	22,393	19,478	20,257	20,241	26,118	26,899	26,954	26,895
Regional Nurse—RI	19,877	17,446	15,267	15,770	15,804	15,577	18,829	18,868	18,827
Senior Nursing Officer I (Senior Nurse 6)	12,263	11,042	9,815	9,961	10,064	10,974	10,382	10,544	10,521
Nursing Officer II (Senior Nurse 8)	10,813	9,823	8,777	8,889	9,004	9,793	9,264	9,409	9,388
Nursing Sister II (Ward Sister)	9,864	9,024	8,067	8,159	8,283	9,357	8,852	8,991	8,971
Deputy Nursing Sister	8,414	7,805	6,977	7,048	7,185	8,084	7,648	7,768	7,751
Staff Nurse	7,348	6,908	6,176	6,236	6,382	7,037	6,657	6,762	6,748
Enrolled Nurse	6,498	6,194	5,538	5,556	5,709	6,270	5,932	6,025	6,012
Nursing Auxiliary	4,574	5,276	4,750	4,760	4,879	5,210	4,928	5,006	4,949
Student—3rd Year	4,832	4,792	4,339	4,340	4,464	4,660	4,408	4,477	4,385
Pupil—2nd Year	4,557	4,561	4,142	4,141	4,311	4,446	4,206	4,272	4,184
Director of Nurse Education I	18,011	15,877	13,930	14,344	14,395	15,803	16,471	16,966	16,930
Senior Tutor	12,571	11,302	10,035	10,193	10,293	11,231	10,625	10,959	10,935
Tutor	11,663	10,538	9,385	9,502	9,610	10,469	9,905	10,238	10,216
Clinical Teacher	10,813	9,823	8,777	8,889	9,004	9,793	9,264	9,604	9,583

Pensions

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates have been made of the effects of changes to the state earnings-related pensions scheme on those already covered by the scheme.

Mr. Whitney: The future of the state earnings-r pensions scheme is being considered in the context social security reviews. Any changes proposed obviously need to take account of the effects on already covered by the scheme, but final decisions not yet been taken.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who will appoint the United Kingdom representatives to the World Health Organisation's planned meeting of experts scheduled for October 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya; and when the appointments will be made.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The World Health Organisation is covening, and is deciding who should be invited to, the conference of experts on the rational use of drugs, expected to be held in Nairobi later this year. The timing of the issue of invitations is a matter for the World Health Organisation.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the article, "Prescribing: the Power to Set Limits", by J. M. Harding and others in the *British Medical Journal* of 9 February, a copy of which he has received.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The article referred to by my hon. Friend concludes that generic prescribing and a limited list of drugs may improve the quality of prescribing and be the only way to curb prescribing costs. We fully agree with these conclusions.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department will undertake a nationwide public information campaign, including local and national newspaper advertisements, to ensure that patients are aware that the revised limited list proposals meet all their clinical needs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. A nationwide publicity campaign will be undertaken. We are currently considering what form this should take.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to public services and voluntary organisations about the transmission of acquired immune deficiency syndrome by saliva where resuscitation is a possibility.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: While there is limited scientific evidence to show that the AIDS-associated virus HTLVIII exists in saliva, no case has ever been reported in this country or abroad where AIDS has been transmitted in this way.

Nevertheless we are liaising closely with the central departments responsible for the emergency services and the prison service, to assist them in reviewing existing procedures for resuscitation. The prison medical service will shortly be issuing guidelines for use by prison health professionals and prison officers dealing with AIDS patients. We are also in touch with voluntary organisations providing first aid services and will be advising them of precautions their staff might take.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps he has taken to ensure that from now on no one receiving a transfusion of blood supplied by the National Health Service will be at risk of contracting acquired immune deficiency syndrome therefrom;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to provide for criminal sanctions against persons who supply blood to the Blood Transfusion Service knowing or believing that they are suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Health Service does not use imported blood obtained from paid donors. In this country we have an entirely voluntary system of blood collection. There is no financial or other incentive for our voluntary donors to put others at risk. Legislation is therefore not needed to deter those at high risk from AIDS from giving blood. The Government have taken steps to make it absolutely clear to such donors and potential donors that they should not give blood.

There is only a very remote chance of contracting AIDS from ordinary blood transfusions given in hospitals. Nevertheless, in addition we hope that screening tests to detect the presence in blood of antibodies to the AIDS related virus will be available for general use later this year. We shall thoroughly evaluate the tests on offer to see which is the most suitable for use in the National Health Service. In anticipation of these developments we have advised regional health authorities to set aside funds in 1985-86 to enable blood transfusion centres to test all blood donations as soon as possible. Testing all donations will reduce the risk still further.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to offer compensation to persons who contract acquired immune deficiency syndrome as a result of receiving contaminated blood supplied by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is only a very remote chance of contracting AIDS from ordinary blood transfusions. There has never been a general state scheme to compensate those who suffer the unavoidable adverse effects which can unhappily arise from many medical procedures.

Depo-Provera

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the contra-indications associated wih the drug Depo-Provera; if these contra-indications are widely known to doctors and prescribing chemists; if the contra-indications are clearly indicated when prescriptions are handed over to patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The company has prepared a data sheet giving details of the contra-indications to, and the known side effects of, Depo-Provera which is available to all doctors. The chief medical officers of the United Kingdom have written to doctors about the possible side effects associated with Depo-Provera and the need for doctors to counsel patients before a decision is reached by the patient about treatment with Depo-Provera. In their letters, chief medical officers have also drawn attention to the information leaflet which has been prepared by the company for doctors to give to patients. The purpose of the leaflet, copies of which are included in the company's prescribing packs for doctors, is to help patients to decide whether they wish to be treated with Depo-Provera. The leaflet and cassette tapes of its text, are available in a number of languages.

I have arranged for copies of the CMO letter from our Department, and copies of doctor's prescribing packs, to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up a fund to compensate any patient who suffers injury as a result of the contra-indications of Depo-Provera.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. It would be for the courts to determine the outcome of any claim for compensation made on the grounds that Depo-Provera, properly used, had been the cause of injury to a patient.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he now has pursuant to the answer of 13 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *220*, on the policy of the Food and Drugs Administration of the United States of America towards the drug Depo-Provera; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that the United States Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) are still considering this matter.

We have asked the Committee on Safety of Medicines for its advice on the report of the public board of inquiry set up by the FDA. As with all medicinal products marketed in the United Kingdom, the safety of Depo-Provera is kept under constant review.

Cadmium Intake (Cigarettes)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for a reply to be sent to the letter sent to the Minister of Health on 4 January by the hon. Member for Gower regarding the relationship between cadmium intake and the smoking of non-filter cigarettes.

Mr. John Patten: I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 20 February.

Drugs

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *215-16*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the past five years those drugs which the World Health Organisation has informed his Department of major changes to warnings in their use, distinguishing between *(a)* where no changes to the United Kingdom data sheets have resulted and *(b)* where changes to the United Kingdom data sheets have resulted;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *215-16*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the drugs that are currently being considered by the licensing authority following information received by his Department from the World Health Organisation of major changes to warnings in their use;

(3) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *215-16*, if he will arrange for his Department to collect records of variations between United Kingdom data sheets and broadly similar documents in other countries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Manchester (Home Heating)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the estates in the Manchester area with heating systems which have been designated as disproportionately expensive to run since his answer of 18 June 1984, *Official Report*, columns *56-7;* how many homes in the area have now been designated; and what has been the total cost since this matter was first raised with his Department by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe.

Mr. Whitney: Fourteen certificates designating heating systems as being disproportionately expensive to run under paragraph 6 of schedule 4 of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983 have been issued for the Greater Manchester area since 18 June 1984. Each certificate may cover the heating system or systems on one, part of, or more than one estate. I shall write to the right hon. Member giving details of the estates concerned.

Designation under paragraph 6 of Schedule 4 applies to heating systems. Information on the numbers of homes containing all the designated heating systems in the Greater Manchester area is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A total of 74 certificates of designation have been issued for the Greater Manchester area since the current arrangements were introduced in 1982. The total cost of estate rate heating additions in the area would depend on the number of supplementary benefit claimants with heating systems affected, the size of the homes, the length of time on benefit and underlying entitlement to other heating additions. This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Diarrhoea

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate a publicity campaign to promote the role of hand washing in reducing the incidence of diarrhoea.

Mr. John Patten: The Health Education Council already promotes the importance of hand washing in preventing the dissemination of various diarrhoeal diseases by way of a range of leaflets and posters. I shall arrange for examples to be sent to the hon. Member.

Children in Care

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of children taken into care in 1982, 1983 and 1984 for each county in England.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of children admitted to the care of each of the metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties in England during the years ended 31 March 1982, 1983 and, where available 1984, is as follows:

	Year ended 31 March		
Counties	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cleveland	538	401	355
Cumbria	267	272	211
Durham	410	363	345
Northumberland	170	192	194

Counties	Year ended 31 March 1982	1983	1984
Tyne and Wear	1,074	978	‡899
Humberside	772	691	*
North Yorkshire	467	372	*
South Yorkshire	801	810	*
West Yorkshire	2,009	1,719	‡1,658
Cheshire	563	498	413
Lancashire	1,259	1,148	1,123
Greater Manchester	2,815	†2,567	*
Merseyside	1,625	1,260	‡1,187
Hereford/Worcester	350	343	299
Shropshire	222	186	225
Staffordshire	545	493	455
Warwickshire	221	194	*
West Midlands	2,724	2,386	‡2,276
Derbyshire	639	700	567
Leicestershire	618	519	*
Lincolnshire	433	378	314
Northamptonshire	443	357	*
Nottinghamshire	1,004	890	*
Bedfordshire	441	367	*
Berkshire	434	430	309
Buckinghamshire	298	280	*
Cambridgeshire	407	433	*
Essex	665	575	550
Hertfordshire	480	408	*
Norfolk	485	425	400
Oxfordshire	313	296	*
Suffolk	307	328	*
Dorset	252	253	*
Hampshire	1,025	973	*
Isle of Wight	72	50	49
Kent	*	628	*
Surrey	382	404	*
East Sussex	489	423	*
West Sussex	261	272	224
Wiltshire	451	417	361
Avon	795	665	579
Cornwall	233	185	*
Devon	521	398	*
Gloucestershire	299	242	227
Somerset	239	244	230

* Data not yet available centrally.
† Incorporates 1982 data for one authority.
‡ Provisional estimates.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra payments have been made due to cold weather each week during the current year by his Department's local offices in Walsall road and Soho road, Birmingham; and what has been the average payment and the average fuel bill on which the payment has been made.

Mr. Whitney: Local social security offices have been asked in paragraph 7451 of the S Manual (a copy of which is in the Library) to keep a record of the number of payments made under Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulation 26 and of the amounts paid. The total number of payments made so far at the local offices in Walsall Road, Perry Barr, and Soho Road, Handsworth is 322. The average payment made so far this winter in these two offices is £2·07. Since the majority of claimants who pay for fuel quarterly will not yet have had a bill for a period including the weeks in which the trigger points set by the chief adjudication officer (set out in appendix 19 of the S Manual) were reached, and since the payment made depends on the average temperature over the period of the claimant's bill, it is too early to say how many payments will be made in total by these two offices this winer or what the average payment will be. The remaining information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it has been decided to allow the single fuel payment for severe weather to be paid for the week ended 24 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that the chief adjudication officer has not yet received the necessary information from the Meteorological Office. I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money has been spent in the current winter in advertising the availability of *(a)* weekly heating additions and *(b)* exceptionally severe weather allowances.

Mr. Whitney: No money has been spent on press or television advertising. In order to supplement the impact of Ministerial statements and national and local press releases, £8,000 has been spent on leaflet printing and posters were already in place in local DHSS offices for use whenever appropriate.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many supplementary benefit claimants who were eligible for exceptionally severe weather payments in 1982, 1983 and 1984 claimed the benefit.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to him on 18 January at column *261*.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants he estimates now are eligible for exceptionally severe weather payments as a result of the announcements he has made under the degree days formula in January and February.

Mr. Whitney: It is too early to say how many claimants will be found to be eligible for payments under Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulation 26. Claimants are asked to claim the payments to which they are entitled when they receive their fuel bills: the majority of those who pay for fuel quarterly will not yet have had a bill for a period including a week in which the 'trigger point" set by the chief adjudication officer for the area was reached.

Private Contractors

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish the approved list of private contractors for catering, cleaning and laundry services of the 14 regional health authorities;

(2) if he will publish the names of those private contractors for catering, cleaning and laundry services who have been dropped from the approved list of regional health authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally.

Office of the Chief Scientist

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received the report of the review, headed by Mr. Tim Nodder, into the work of the Office of the Chief Scientist.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We expect to receive the report shortly.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of redundancy money so far paid out by district health authorities to staff in catering, cleaning and laundry services whose work has been taken over by private contractors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have not collected centrally information about redundancy payments made by health authorities since March 1981, when responsibility for recovering redundancy rebates from the Department of Employment was devolved to health authorities.

Drug Manufacturers (Inducements)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of inducements offered by drugs manufacturers to general practitioners and dispensing doctors on the level of prescribing of particular drugs under the National Health Service; and if he will quantify that cost;

(2) what information he has as to inducements offered by drugs wholesalers and manufacturers; what other methods are used by drugs wholesalers and manufacturers to persuade general practitioners and dispensing doctors to prescribe particular drugs on the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how much he estimates drugs manufacturers spend on general practitioners in persuading them to prescribe particular drugs on the National Health Service; and what information he has as to the manner in which such money is spent;

(4) what arrangements he has to claw back excess discounts on National Health Service prescribed drugs received by dispensing doctors; and if he will make a statement;

(5) pursuant to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *447*, whether there is any evidence to suggest that discounts offered to dispensing doctors by drugs wholesalers and manufacturers result in the unnecessary prescription of particular drugs on the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement;

(6) pursuant to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *447*, in what manner and by what system dispensing doctors receive additional income from the varying levels of discount on the drug cost offered to them by wholesalers and manufacturers; to whom, and by whom, the discounted price is paid; to whom, and by whom, the full price is paid; and if he will make a statement;

(7) pursuant to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *447*, whether additional income is received by doctors from the varying levels of dicount on the drug cost offered to them by wholesalers and manufacturers in relation to drugs contained in the provisional limited list which he announced on 8 November 1984; and if he will quantify that income;

(8) pursuant to his reply of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *447*, what is the average amount of additional income which each dispensing doctor receives from the varying levels of discount on the drug cost offered to them by wholesalers and manufacturers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1982, the latest year for which complete returns are available, companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme with sales exceeding £2 million declared sales promotion expenditure amounting to £155 million (UK), not all of which was accepted as an admissable expense in the pricing of NHS medicines. About 46 per cent. was spent on representatives, 21 per cent. on advertising, 11 per cent. on literature and the remainder on administrative and other expenses. The companies also spent some £12 million on "information" items such as data sheets, material for medical symposia and samples. They were not allowed under the scheme to reflect any expenditure on gifts and similar inducements in the prices of NHS medicines and we have no information about expenditure on such matters.

General medical practitioners' remuneration arrangements are designed to pay them on average the net income which the Government (having regard to the Review Body's recommendations) have decided is due to them and the expenses actually incurred providing general medical services. We carried out an inquiry in 1983 which established that dispensing doctors obtained discounts. As the reimbursement which they then received for the cost of the drugs which they dispensed was not adjusted to take account of discounts, a disproportionate share of the expenses incurred by general medical practitioners was paid to dispensing doctors. With the profession's agreement, from 1 July 1984 the reimbursement prices paid to dispensing doctors were adjusted to take some account of the discounts the inquiry had revealed. Discount will be completely offset from 1 April 1985 when the full discount adjustment comes into effect.

No information is available about the discount obtained in relation to specific drugs. We have no evidence to suggest that the availability of discounts results in the unnecessary prescription of any drug.

In 1983-84, the last year before discount was taken into account, it is estimated that dispensing doctors in Great Britain received on average additional income from discounts of about £1,200.

State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the likely sum that would be paid to *(a)* those on average income, *(b)* those on three quarters average income and *(c)* those on half average income, assuming the current level of annual increases in earnings and prices as the state earnings-related pension scheme to those who have remained contracted-in since the scheme started in 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2010, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Departmental Offices, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the possible closure of his Department's offices in Liverpool;

how many have been concerned with the office in Parthenon drive; what his reponse has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The only representation we have received about the possible closure of any of the Department's offices in Liverpool is a letter of 14 February from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby. We will reply to the letter on completion of our inquiries.

Unclaimed Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his latest estimate for the amounts of money that go unclaimed in *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* heating additions, *(c)* family income supplement, *(d)* housing benefit, *(e)* single payments and *(f)* supplementary pension; and whether he will give estimates for (i) Scotland, (ii) England and (iii) Wales;

(2) what is his latest estimate for the proportion of eligible claimants who do not claim the following benefits *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* heating additions, *(c)* family income supplement, *(d)* housing benefit, *(e)* single payments and *(f)* supplementary pension; and whether he will give estimates for (i) Scotland, (ii) England and (iii) Wales.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that not all the information requested is available. There are no reliable estimates about unclaimed heating additions or single payments. No estimates are available about unclaimed housing benefit: the latest information relates to rent and rate rebates and rent allowances in England and Wales. An estimate of the amount of unclaimed supplementary benefit in Scotland is available, but generally it is only possible to make reliable estimates of take-up of benefits for Great Britain as a whole. The latest information is given in the table.

Great Britain except where stated

Year and Benefit	*Annual amount of unclaimed benefit* £ *million*	*Proportion of eligible claimants not claiming benefit* *Per cent.*
1981		
Supplementary benefit	*760	29
1981/82		
Family income supplement	57	about 50
1982		
Rent rebates	†	‡28
Rate rebates	†	‡35
Rent allowances	†	‡38
1981		
Supplementary pension	210	33

* includes (i) £50 million in Scotland, and (ii) amount of unclaimed supplementary pension.
† Not known.
‡ in England and Wales.

Heating Allowances

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why £20 million of the money allocated for special heating allowances has not been taken up in Scotland.

Mr. Whitney: Money is not specifically allocated for heating additions payable to people living in Scotland. There are no reliable estimates of the number of people in Scotland who do not get heating additions to which they are entitled. The Government continue to promote take-up of supplementary benefit generally. Claim forms are given to all retirement pensioners and widows and to all unemployed and all sickness benefit claimants. The Department also co-operates as fully as possible at local level with responsible take-up campaigns mounted by local authorities. Staff are trained to be alert to entitlement to heating additions and postal claim forms used by unemployed people have specific questions intended to establish entitlement. Heating additions are also referred to in a number of leaflets published by DHSS, in particular "Help with Heating Costs" (SB17), copies of which are available from local social security offices.

Drug Prescriptions

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish reasoned observations on the current procedures for containing the cost of drug prescriptions in Norway, Australia, Canada and West Germany.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Such matters are the responsibilities of the Governments of the countries concerned.

Social Service Inspectorate

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether agreement has yet been reached on the establishment of a social service inspectorate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In April 1983, my right hon. Friend, sent to the chairmen of all social services committees a consultative document proposing development of our Department's social work service—which already exercises inspectorial functions—explicitly into an inspectorate for the local authority social services. In the light of a wide range of helpful comments on the consultative document, the Government have now reached agreement in principle with the local authority associations on the way forward. We have agreed the following joint statement on the arrangements now proposed.

"The inspectorate will assist local authorities to obtain value for money through the efficient and economic use of available resources. Its aim will be to help to secure the most effective use of professional and other resources, normally by identifying good practice and spreading knowledge about it.

Inspections will be of 3 main types:—

(a) initiated by Ministers and the Department in exercise of the Secretary of State's formal powers of inspection;

(b) undertaken outside formal powers, related to issues of general concern and covering a number of local authorities, by agreement with the authorities concerned and in accordance with a programme agreed by the local authority associations; and

(c) undertaken outside formal powers, but at the request of, or in agreement with, an individual local authority and in relation to specific services or activities of that authority.

Reports written as a result of formal inspections will be made in the first instance to the Secretary of State, but all other reports will be made concurrently to the authorities concerned for their social services committees to see. Reports will normally be documents of public access.

Formally, the existing statutory powers of inspection (which are considered sufficient for the purposes of the new

Inspectorate) are vested in the Secretary of State, and he will be the Minister responsible for the Inspectorate's management and actions. In practice, however, the programme of work of the Inspectorate outside formal powers will be a joint concern of central and local government. This will be reflected in a Steering Group of representatives of the Department and the local authority associations, with the following terms of reference:

"To consider the proposals of the Social Services Inspectorate for inspections of local authority personal social services (other than those to be made under statutory powers, or in relation to specific services or activities of an individual authority at the request of or in agreement with that authority); to agree annually a programme of such inspections; and to review from time to time the scope for future work of the Inspectorate."

The staff of the Social Services inspectorate will consist of members of the existing Social Work Service, supplemented by staff from relevant disciplines on attachment from local authorities and other organisations, including experts in appropriate branches of management and in performance measurement. The Inspectorate will aim to complement, not compete with, the work of the Audit Commission and will continue existing collaboration with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, the Probation Inspectorate and the Health Advisory Service."

The new inspectorate will come into operation on 1 April 1985. I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the help which we have had from the local authority associations in the consideration of these arrangements.

Nurse Practitioners

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list his powers in relation to the operation of nurse practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Nurse practitioner is not a category of health care professional recognised by the National Health Service.

Sister Burke-Masters

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a request to give Sister Burke-Masters a limited licence to prescribe drugs; if he will take steps to enable her to reopen her surgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. We are considering t implications of this request. The provision of nursing ca by Sister Burke-Masters to persons attending the S George's men's care unit is a matter for those responsib for that unit.

Rent and Rate Rebates

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services if he will estimate the cost to public funds including water rates in the rate rebate scheme.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 Decemb 1984, c. *375*]: The estimated net benefit cost of includir water rates in the current rate rebate scheme is about £7 million. It has been assumed that water rates would b added to domestic rates for benefit calculation purpose The needs allowances currently include an eleme reflecting 40 per cent. of domestic rates and 100 per cen of domestic water and sewerage charges. It has therefo been assumed that the needs allowances would be reduce to take only 40 per cent. of average water rates in account.

Pensioners

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbe of pensioners who have other incomes apart from stat benefit, earned or unearned incomes, within the followin categories: *(a)* nil, *(b)* up to £250 per year, *(c)* up to £50 per year, *(d)* up to £750 per year, *(e)* up to £1,000 per yea and *(f)* up to £1,250 per year.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1985 c. *75*]: The distribution of the amount of income apa from state social security benefits is shown in the table The estimates are based on family expenditure survey dat for 1981 with the money values uprated by the genera retail price index to December 1984 equivalents. Th estimates include both single and married pensione families but exclude pensioners living in institutions suc as residential homes, or hospitals, and people over pensio age with no state social security benefit.

*Amount of total family income other than state retirement pension or equivalent**	*Number of families headed by a person over pension age with head or spouse receiving state retirement pension or equivalent benefit**		
£ per annum	*Income from earnings*	*Income other than earnings*	*Thousand All pensioner familie*
With other income up to:			
£ 250	100	1,550	1,39
£ 251—£ 500	50	700	65
£ 501—£ 750	50	600	55
£ 751—£1,000	50	300	30
£1,001—£1,250	50	250	20
over £1,250	500	1,450	1,85
Total with other income†	750	4,850	4,95
Total with no other income	5,550	1,450	1,36
Total with and without other income	6,300	6,300	6,30

Notes: * Equivalent benefits are widows' benefit, invalidity benefit, industrial or war disablement benefit and supplementary pension.
† Estimates are rounded to the nearest 50,000; sub-totals do therefore not sum.

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the research he has

commissioned on the subject of women's health subsequent to Her Majesty's Government's reply to the United Nations end of decade for women questionnaire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *167*]: Our Department has commissioned the following research relating to women's health:

Psychological morbidity associated with screening for breast cancer.
An economic evaluation of the early detection of breast cancer.
A study of chlamydia trachomatis in the female genital tract.
An overview of research on the provision and utilisation of the child health services.
An evaluation of respite care for children in England and Wales.
The development of methods of evaluation of the preventative child health services.
A study of the rubella immunisation state of females, especially those first found susceptible during a pregnancy.
Infections in hospital nurses.

A study on attitudes to pregnancy has been extended of a further three years and two other items have been started which are closely related to the health of women:

An assessment of home care of the dying.
A study of patterns of long stay care for people with severe dementia.

However, these studies which we have commissioned are only a small proportion of the total of medical research financed by the Government. The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department of Education and Science, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. Details of its research can be found in the copy of the council's handbook for 1984-85, which is available in the Library of the House.

NHS (Administrative Costs)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the amount of money he expects to receive from the National Health Service trust funds to pay for administrative costs during 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *588*.]: No estimate can be made of the sums involved because these costs have not been consistently identified or recovered to date. This lack of information should be rectified in the future following the issue of a recent health circular, HC(85)6, which requires health authorities to identify and charge to the trust funds any expenses incurred in administering the trusts. This common practice is sanctioned by section 30(2) of the Trustee Act 1925. The costs so charged will be reimbursed to the health authority.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for each of the last five years, how much the Department has spent on maintaining electric-powered wheelchairs for *(a)* indoor use and *(b)* outdoor use; and what is the average cost for each type of electric-powered wheelchair;

(2) for each of the last five years, how many people have been issued with electric-powered indoor wheelchairs; how many of these have also been issued with an outdoor attendant-controlled electric wheelchair; and what is the cost of supplying indoor electric-powered wheelchairs;

(3) for each of the last five years *(a)* how much has been spent on the wheelchair services, *(b)* how many attendant-controlled electric powered wheelchairs have been (i) issued and (ii) bought as new by his Department and *(c)* what is the cost of providing attendant-controlled electric-powered wheelchairs;

(4) for each of the last five years how many people have applied for *(a)* an indoor electric-powered wheelchair and *(b)* an outdoor electric-powered wheelchair and had their application refused in each case;

(5) how many representations he has received on the need to provide occupant-controlled electric-powered wheelchairs that have either indoor and outdoor use or outdoor use only.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *588*.]: The following information relates to the provision of wheelchairs through artificial limb and appliance centres in England.

Annual expenditure on the wheelchair service, excluding service on-costs and not adjusted for inflation, was:

	£ million
1979-80	13·42
1980-81	18·27
1981-82	18·28
1982-83	20·07
1983-84	21·90

Expenditure in 1983-84 costed on a commercial basis to include service on-costs was £32·25 million.

The following table summarises the information requested on electric-powered indoor wheelchairs:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Number issued†	3,010	3,723	4,130	4,982	5,322
Total cost of purchases* (£ million)	0·48	0·87	1·15	0·57	0·73
Total cost of maintenance* (£ million)	0·75	1·24	1·32	1·91	2·25
Average cost of maintenance per wheelchair on issue* (£)	94·70	167·60	168·70	223·40	237·50

The following table summarises the information requested on electric outdoor attendant controlled wheelchairs:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-8*
Number issued†	3,709	3,732	4,015	4,166	4,84
Number bought as new	956	478	60	Nil	N
Total cost of purchases* (£ million)	0·48	0·24	0·03	Nil	N
Total cost of maintenance * (£ million)	0·48	0·58	0·59	0·74	0·9
Average cost of maintenance per wheelchair on issue* (£)	54·20	76·20	76·70	101·80	125·9

* Excludes service on-costs. Costs not adjusted for inflation.
† Includes issues from stock.

The full cost of supplying a wheelchair of a particular kind cannot at present be isolated.

Figures relating to the dual provision of electric indoor wheelchairs and electric attendant-controlled outdoor wheelchairs could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Figures relating to the number of people found ineligible for either type of powered wheelchair are not available.

We have received over 40 separate representations about the provision of occupant-controlled powered indoor/outdoor and/or powered outdoor wheelchairs, including a petition signed by over 7,000 people, in the last six months.

DEFENCE

Departmental Reorganisation

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the outcome of the reorganisation of his Department which took place in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The new organisation has not yet been in operation for two months; it is therefore too early to draw firm conclusions as to its success, but experience so far gives every ground for optimism.

China

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet his counterpart in the Government of the People's Republic of China to discuss military co-operation.

Mr. Heseltine: I have nothing to add to my reply to my hon. Friend's question on 29 January at column *155*.

Falkland Islands

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is likely to be possible to provide a television service for the Falkland Islands garrison.

Mr. Stanley: I am glad to announce that we have authorised the provision of a TV service operating from the Mount Pleasant airfield site in the Falkland Islands. Orders for the necessary equipment have already been placed by the Services Sound and Vision Corporation and it is planned to bring the service into operation in mid-1986. The service will be a blend of taped current BBC and ITV programmes.

I am sure that this will be a very welcome addition to the recreational facilities available to those members of the armed forces serving in the Falklands.

Information Technology Systems (Director-General)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State fo Defence what are the terms of reference for th appointment of the director-general of Informatio Technology Systems, the salary range, job specificatio and level of appointment within the Civil Service.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence is looking fo candidates to fill an important new post to lead and co ordinate the development of a corporate strategy fo information technology in the Department and throughou the armed forces. Candidates are being sought from bot the public sector and, with the help of an executive searc firm, the private sector. The post will be at the level o grade 3 (under-secretary) at a salary of £30,800 p including London weighting. I have placed a copy of th full job specification in the Library.

Weather Forecasts

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Defenc what representations he has received regarding th accuracy of weather forecasts in recent months; and if h will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: One formal representation has been received The ability of the Meteorological Office to provide a good indication of the changes in the character of th weather for periods up to six days has improved markedl in recent years as a result of the continuing developmen of numerical methods of weather prediction that exploi the capabilities of the most advanced computers and th weather observations made from satellites. Work currentl in progress at the Meteorological Office is expected t allow greater detail to be provided with greater accuracy on a more local basis in the short period weather forecasts.

Clean Industrial Services Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State fo Defence whether Clean Industrial has consulted him ove its policy of dismissing cleaners engaged at hi Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Cleaners (Security Clearance)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State fo Defence if his Department has refused security clearance to any cleaners employed in his Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Beryllium Leak (ROF, Cardiff)

Mr. Allan Rogers asked the Secretary of State fo Defence if he will make a statement on the Beryllium dus leak at the royal ordnance factory, Cardiff.

Mr. Lee: There has been no leak of Beryllium from the royal ordnance factory, Cardiff, into the outside environment. However, routine monitoring in a Beryllium workshop revealed that higher than normal levels of airborne Beryllium were present in a small area of the facility on 26 January and some parts of the working area were found to be contaminated by Beryllium powder. Immediate corrective action was taken. The Beryllium facility was closed to normal operations while investigation and decontamination were put in hand. No member of staff has shown symptoms of any harmful effects.

Beryllium is a non-radioactive but toxic material. It is used by ROF Cardiff under procedures designed to ensure that no one is exposed to dangerous levels of Beryllium powder. These procedures reflect the advice of the Health and Safety Executive as well as the Ministry's own expertise in handling the material. The area affected is within a purpose-built, self-contained facility so designed and constructed that it is kept under negative air pressure to prevent leakage to the outside environment. Air is exhausted from the building only after passing through banks of filters. The output is monitored and results for the period in question were not abnormal and were within normal limits. Neither on this nor on any other occasion has Beryllium been emitted to the outside environment in excess of permitted levels.

RAF Fairford

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the role in NATO of the tanker aircraft based at RAF Fairford;

(2) whether the United States tanker aircraft based at RAF Fairford have any role outside NATO;

(3) what is the NATO command to which the United States tanker aircraft based at Fairford are assigned and under which they carry out NATO exercises.

Mr. Lee: The KC135 tanker aircraft based at RAF Fairford support NATO forces within Europe, but formally remain part of the United States Strategic Air Command. Subject to the normal process of consultation, any role they might have in support of United States requirements outside the NATO area is a matter for the United States Government.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States B-52 aircraft capable of firing air-launched cruise missiles have visited RAF Fairford.

Mr. Lee: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 18 June 1984.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the $7·4 million to be spent by the United States Air Force on a dental clinic at RAF Fairford will be spent in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The Property Services Agency is managing the design and future construction of a medical/dental clinic at RAF Fairford, and will be following normal Her Majesty's Government tendering and contractual procedures. It is too early to say which contracts, if any, will be placed with United Kingdom firms.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used to choose RAF Fairford as the site for the bi-annual air fare and display.

Mr. Lee: Now that Greenham common has become fully operational it can no longer offer accommodation on base to support the international air tattoo. It was therefore agree that the 1985 tattoo should be held at RAF Fairford, which has both the necessary facilities and a level of operational activity more compatible with the activities of the tattoo. The RAF benevolent fund has not yet made any proposals for tattoos beyond 1985.

Fairford Air Display

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any nation will be refused permission to display military equipment at the Fairford air display because of its record on human rights.

Mr. Lee: Participation in the 1985 international air tattoo at RAF Fairford is a matter for the organisers of the event.

Wintex 85 and Operation Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of the United States of America National Guard will take part in Wintex 85 and Operation Brave Defender.

Mr. Stanley: Members of the US National Guard will not take part in Exercise Brave Defender, nor in that part of Wintex-Cimex 85 which is played in the United Kingdom.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his latest estimate of the total cost of Exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. Stanley: Those additional defence costs which are directly attributable to the exercise, and these exclude such items as normal pay and allowances, are currently estimated to amount to some £3 million.

Nuclear Weapon Capability

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements Her Majesty's Government intend to make to ensure the maintenance of their nuclear weapon capability when all nuclear weapon testing is banned by international agreement.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the answer by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) on 6 February 1985 at column *593*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Production (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing all expenditure from public funds on agriculture, including the cost of administration, which is not covered by table 29 of the annual review White Paper (Cmnd. 9423); and if he will identify separately the principal items.

Mr. Jopling: The main categories of expenditure on agriculture are set out in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd. 9428 Part 3 Programme 3) published on 22 January. Details of expenditure on

individual schemes and services, and costs of administration, are contained in the annual Supply Estimates and Appropriation Accounts.

EC (Dairy Quotas)

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made since November 1984 in the implementation of dairy quotas by member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Payments of the first instalments of supplementary levy were due to be made on 15 November 1984. It became clear, however, that certain member states were not yet ready to charge the levy and as a result the Commission deferred the first collection date for one month. At the December meeting of the Agriculture Council nine member states (with Denmark abstaining) adopted a statement noting that there were still technical and administrative difficulties concerning the application of the system in certain member states and inviting the Commission to allow postponement of the first payment of levy until the end of the marketing year.

The Commission did not make any proposals to this effect. The United Kingdom and certain other member states therefore decided to suspend action on the collection of the levy until all member states were conforming to the requirements and collection could proceed in parallel. The Commission withheld from the December advances to member states for agricultural expenditure amounts equivalent to their estimated levy liability. They also withheld 12½ per cent. of milk sector advances in January for those member states which had failed to collect levy due in December and, in addition, issued letters initiating infringement proceedings against those member states. The Commission have also initiated infringement proceedings against Italy for her failure to make the required implementing arrangements and against Denmark concerning its arrangements for operating the supplementary levy through a single purchasing agency for milk.

At the January meeting of the Agriculture Council, the Commissioner presented a package of proposals for amendments to the supplementary levy which was designed to overcome some of the problems experienced by member states in implementing the quota system. These included, inter alia, proposals which would permit greater flexibility between direct sales and wholesale quotas and a proposal which, for 1984-85 would permit transfer of unused quota between regions and thereby reduce the amounts of levy due. These proposals were debated in the House on Wednesday 20 February and are due to be considered by the Agriculture Council on 25-26 February. The Commission has also provided for a delay of 20 days in collection of the levy for the third quarter which was due in mid-February.

The Government remain fully committed to the supplementary levy arrangements. We welcome the Commission's proposals which will help member states to overcome various difficulties in implementing the levy and permit some easing of its impact in the first year. We shall, however, continue to insist, as we have done from the outset, that the levy must be fully and effectively implemented by all member states.

Horticultural Production

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Ministe Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will pu in the *Official Report* a table showing the growth volume of production since 1980 in the case of veget fruit and non-edible horticultural products, respecti

Mr. MacGregor: Because of the diversit horticultural crops, trends in the volume of productio usually represented by valuing production at co prices.

Value of Output at Constant 1980 Prices

£

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Vegetables	560	534	575	539
Fruit	170	148	163	166
Non-edibles	183	190	191	191

* Provisional

Source: Annual Review 1985: Department net income calculatio

Green Pound

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Ministe Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will pu in the *Official Report* a table showing each change i level of the green pound since 1 January 1973, increase in common agricultural policy prices at the a price fixing, and each change in the reference price o agricultural unit of account against the market rate o European unit of account-European currency unit.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Her (Mr. Shepherd) on 28 March 1984 at column 22 changes to the green pound and to the hon. Membe Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) o February 1985 at columns 65-68 on changes to prices. As I told the hon. Member in my reply o February 1985 at column *583* information on each ch in the market value of the European currency unit ag the relevant agricultural accounting unit is not re available and could only be produced at disproportio cost.

Agricultural Wages

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will pu in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years to 1984 the earnings index for the agricultural wo covered by table 21 of Cmnd. 9423, deflated by the ch in the taxes and prices index plus the change in nati insurance contributions; and if he will also provid index for the hourly as well as weekly earnings toge with figures showing the change in output per head.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested on earnings of agricultural workers in the United Kingdo shown in the table. An index of labour productivitiy b on gross product at constant prices per whole- equivalent worker appears at table 24 of the An Review of Agriculture 1984 (Cmnd. 9423). meaningful attribution of productivity amongst diffe sectors of the labour force can be made.

Indices of average earnings of agricultural workers (a) (1980=100)

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	*1984
Average weekly earnings real terms (b)	98	100	98	97	102	105
Average hourly earnings money terms	82	100	111	122	131	143
real terms (b)	97	100	96	97	100	105
real terms (c)	97	100	99	100	103	107

* Forecast

Notes: (a) For all hired regular whole-time male workers, 20 years old and over.

(b) Deflated by the tax and price index. The TPI takes account of the changes in liability to direct taxes including employees national insurance contributions.

(c) Deflated by the retail price index.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is carrying out or is aware of, apart from the Boxworth experiment, into the effects of pesticides on *(a)* moths and butterflies, *(b)* flowering plants, *(c)* birds and *(d)* beneficial insects that may be exposed to pesticides in hedgerows or other habitats contaminated by spray or vapour drift.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *580*]: A great deal of relevant research, in particular surveillance, is summarised in a paper, published in 1983, entitled The Environmental Cost of Pesticide Usage in the United Kingdom. Much of this work is still continuing. I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

Additionally, the Agriculture and Food Research Council's weed research organisation is studying the effects of pesticides and cultural techniques on the flora of field boundaries and is investigating the susceptibility of a range of flowering plants to herbicides. The Game Conservancy is investigating the effects of pesticides on beneficial insects and birds and the environmental value of unsprayed headlands in cereal crops.

My Department is investigating the effects of pesticides on bird behaviour and is funding a field study of the effects of insecticide use in forestry on bird populations. Agrochemical companies do a considerable amount of work on the effects of their products on beneficial insects in cereals and other crops. Certain universities also contribute to the work on beneficial insects.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 February 1985

WALES

Milk Quotas

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that official figures are available by county of the allocation of both primary quotas and secondary quotas, and the transfer of quotas, and to inform farmers who may be involved in his quota schemes that information concerning their individual allocation may be used in this manner, or published in a way which could identify individual farm statistics.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Details of quota allocations and transfers are contained in a register maintained by the milk marketing boards. Access to this information is limited to people with an interest in the holding. It may be possible, in due course, to publish a geographical breakdown depending upon the limits of confidentiality and cost.

Oxygen Concentrators

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress on the inroduction of oxygen concentrators in the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Arrangements are being made to provide oxygen concentrators in place of cylinders for patients requiring large quantities of oxygen. It is anticipated that concentrators will be available on the prescription of general medical practitioners by mid to late summer.

M4 (Damage)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the damage to the eastern lane of the M4 caused by heavy lorries carrying coal and iron ore to Llanwern since 6 March 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Evidence of a deterioration in the state of the carriageway pavements along the M4 affected by the lorry convoys between Port Talbot and Llanwern was discerned before this additional traffic occurred. Any increase in traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles, reduces the life of the carriageway pavement but it is not possible to isolate the effect of any particular group of vehicles.

Road Construction (EC Funds)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether any funds allocated under the EEC regional fund for the construction of roads in Wales have been or are to be lost as a result of the decisions made by his Department not to meet any share of the capital expenditure necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I assume the hon. Gentleman's question relates to the revised capital allocation and transport supplementary grant arrangements inroduced in 1985-86, under which transport supplementary grant is payable only on schemes with a capital cost of £5 million or more. These arrangements will have no effect whatsoever on a local highway authority's eligibility for European regional development fund grant.

Intex 85

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution his Department will make to the exercise Intex 85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: None.

Hospital and Community Health Services (Resources)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached decisions about the allocation of resources for hospital and community health services in Wales in 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. I will provide a cash increase over provision in 1984-85 of 6·3 per cent. This cash increase includes an allowance of 4 per cent. for price movements and 3 per cent. for pay. The balance over and above these allowances represents growth of 3·1 per cent. which is £19·1 million in cash terms. This is on top of the recurring revenue growth provided for health authorities in Wales of 12·8 per cent. comparing 1979-80 with the resources available in the current year.

Of the £19·1 million growth moneys, £13·044 million will be devoted to centrally funded developments. These include some £9 million for the commissioning of major hospital developments at Bridgend, Morriston and Wrexham; over £2 million for further development in regional services, including the new renal dialysis facilities in Swansea, Carmarthen and Bangor and the continuing expansion of the bone marrow transplantation programme; nearly £800,000 for continued consultant expansion in shortage specialties, and £1·5 million to develop for the services for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people and to combat the misuse of drugs.

The balance of £6·057 million (or 1 per cent.) will be made available to health authorities for discretionary use, on the basis of a minimum of 0·75 per cent. discretionary growth for all authorities with the balance of 0·25 per cent. allocated to those authorities indicated by the revenue allocation formula to be relatively underfunded. There is to be a major review of the formula in the current year to form the basis for allocations in 1986-87 and, against this background, I regard the proposed level of provision for revenue equalisation as appropriate towards my programme to remove the major inequalities in the relative funding of authorities.

The revenue resources available for individual authorities in 1985-86 will be as shown in the table. These allocations do not take into account further sums which will be made available following decisions on centrally funded developments for the coming year. These will be announced shortly.

Revenue Allocations 1985-86

	£ million
Clwyd	75,992
East Dyfed	47,780
Pembrokeshire	16,573
Gwent	94,134
Gwynedd	46,451
Mid Glamorgan	106,287
Powys	21,622
South Glamorgan	126,969
West Glamorgan	76,085

I am glad that we have been able to make available these additional resources for the NHS in Wales. This demonstrates yet again this Government's commitment to a developing NHS which meets the needs of the people of Wales.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Apiculture

Mr. Murphy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy towards apiculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's policy towards apiculture is aimed at maintaining the health of the bee population. To meet this objective the Government provide a wide range of assistance to bee-keepers on disease and other matters and operate health controls on imports.

Agricultural Production (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the total spent in the United Kingdom under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guidance section of the European Economic Community budget in 1983 and in 1984; and if he will give particulars of the amounts spent on *(a)* limiting production and *(b)* increasing production.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *584*]: Total payments in the United Kingdom from the guidance section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund in 1983 and 1984 were £88·2 million and £68·1 million, respectively. The only Community scheme operated in this country which is specifically intended to limit production is the non-marketing of milk premium scheme. EAGGF expenditure in the United Kingdom on this scheme in 1983 and 1984 was £14·4 million and £12·9 million, respectively, of which 40 per cent. was funded from the guidance section. The Community's agricultural structures policy is directed not to increasing production but to assisting the modernisation of farms, the continuation of farming in less-favoured areas and the improvement of marketing and processing of agricultural products.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the agricultural products regulated under the common agricultural policy the amount of levy payable in the United Kingdom on importation from third countries, the amount of customs duty, the intervention or th price, the target price and the United Kingdom price and the world price.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 F 1985, c. *583*]: Detailed information about interv threshold and target prices was set out in table 2 right hon. Friend's reply of 4 December 1984 at *105*. Full information about customs duties is conta the United Kingdom "Tariff and Overseas Classification," a copy of which is in the Library House. The remainder of the information requeste out for the main products in tables 1 and 2. The prices" shown in table 1 are generally the lowe prices at the Community frontier underlyi commission's calculaton of the variable import le remind the hon. Member that these are the lowes recorded and it is highly likely that on average prices would have to be paid if larger quantities be purchased on world markets. The "world prices" do not necessarily relate to the same quality or prese of product for which United Kingdom market pri set out in table 2.

Table 1
Levy applicable in the United Kingdom and Notional "World" on 13 February 1985 for the main traded agricultural comm

	Levy† applicable in United Kingdom (£/tonne)	*"wor*
Common wheat	43	
Barley	45	
Maize	34	
Rice	334	
Sugar	‡282	
Olive oil	384	
Butter	‖1,326	
Skimmed milk powder	638	
Beef and veal	¶1,426	
Pigmeat	238	
Sheepmeat	•—	
Poultrymeat	132	
Eggs	208	

* "World" prices have been calculated by subtracting applicable on 13 February from the threshold/guide price. The b is also adjusted for duty. In the case of pigmeat, poultrymeat a the "world" price has been taken as the sluicegate pri supplementary levy where appropriate. The resulting estimate converted from ECU/t at the appropriate market rate of £0·651359=1 ECU;

† The rates of levy vary for different tariff headings. The rate are : beef and veal—carcase; pigmeat—carcase; poultrymeat- cent. chickens; rice—wholly milled long grain; olive oil- lampante; eggs—in shell including supplementary levy. Le shown after deduction of the monetary compensatory amou applicable;

‡ In practice the United Kingdom's imports from third cou normally covered by the Lomé convention and enter the Co levy-free;

‖ A special lower rate of levy is applicable to imports of bu New Zealand;

¶ Most imports of beef from third countries are subject t arrangements allowing entry at reduced levy rates;

• Imports of lamb under voluntary restraint arrangeme principal suppliers and related agreements are subject to a reduce of 10 per cent. ad valorem. Any imports outside these arrange subject to levies which cannot exceed the 20 per cent. tariff bou GATT.

Table 2

Selected average market/wholsale prices United Kingdom
Week ending 9 February 1985

	£/tonne
Common wheat (grower to merchant price England and Wales)	112
Barley (grower to merchant price England and Wales)	112
Maize (USA export Bristol)	159
Rice (US long grain—London)	570
Sugar (refined bulk granulated)	419
Olive oil (EC origin, cif UK)	1,847
Butter (English, wholesale, London)	2,270
Skimmed milk powder (list price)	1,050
Fat cattle, certified UK (liveweight)	947
Fat sheep, certified, GB (estimated dressed carcase weight)	1,687
Fat pigs (all pigs, deadweight)	1,032
Poultrymeat (broilers, liveweight)	557
Eggs (size 3, packer to producer price)	579

Note:

A wide range of price quotations exists for individual commodities depending on quality, presentation, stage of marketing and so on. Those shown are intended to be illustrative of prices paid by wholesalers or received by producers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Local Authorities (Emergency Planning)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available information and guidance on the likely scenarios involving conventional attack and nuclear attack, respectively, in order that local authorities may fully investigate the potential conflict in terms of emergency planning, referred to in ES1/1984 "Planning Assumptions."

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no conflict between the planning functions for conventional and nuclear war that can be resolved by further guidance. The circular merely points out that, in dealing with the effects of conventional war, civil defence organisers

"would also be concerned with preparations against the possibility of nuclear attack, and this could impose an additional and sometimes conflicting burden".

Any such conflicts could be resolved only by those directly concerned in the light of local circumstances.

Nuclear Attack

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available information on the likely scale of a nuclear attack on the United Kingdom; and whether previous estimates of 200 megatons are still used as a guideline.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As I said in a reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 6 December at columns 279-80, it is impossible to predict with any certainty the size of a nuclear attack, the targets it would include, or its effects. They would depend on the political and strategic intentions of an enemy at the time. The Government's policy of deterrence aims to prevent an attack of any sort happening.

Concessionary Television Licence

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will set out, for the last year for which figures are available *(a)* the total sum collected in England and Wales from the 5p concessionary television licence and *(b)* the estimated cost of this collection in salaries, overheads, postage and so on to his Department;

(2) if he will give the total number of man-days expended in his Department on the collection and handling of the 5p concessionary television licence, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We estimate that the total cost of administering the concessionary licence scheme in 1984 was about £155,000 and the revenue from fees was some £29,000. About 3,300 man-days were spent on this work at the national TV licence records office and in the Department.

Police (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the annual pay increments which have been allocated rank by rank to police officers in each year since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Following are the salary scales:

Provincial Forces

Rank	*September 1979* £	*September 1980* £	*September 1981* £	*September 1982* £	*September 1983* £	*September 1984* £
Constable						
Under 1 year's service	4,086	4,956	5,610	6,189	6,708	6,708
After 1 year's service	4,371	5,301	6,000	6,618	7,173	7,173
After 2 years' service	4,881	5,919	6,699	7,389	8,010	8,442
After 3 years" service	4,995	6,057	6,858	7,563	8,199	8,643
After 4 year's service	5,163	6,261	7,086	7,815	8,472	8,928
After 5 years' service	5,334	6,471	7,326	8,082	8,760	9,234
After 6 years' service	5,505	6,678	7,560	8,340	9,042	9,531
After 7 years' service	5,676	6,885	7,794	8,598	9,321	9,825
After 8 years' service	5,844	7,089	8,025	8,853	9,597	10,116
After 12 years' service	6,186	7,503	8,493	9,369	10,155	10,704
After 15 years' service	6,471	7,848	8,883	9,798	10,620	11,193
Sergeant						
Under 1 years' service	6,186	7,503	8,493	9,369	10,155	10,704
After 1 year's service	6,471	7,848	8,883	9,798	10,620	11,193
After 2 years' service	6,696	8,121	9,192	10,140	10,992	11,586
After 3 years' service	6,924	8,397	9,504	10,482	11,361	11,973

Rank		September 1979 £	September 1980 £	September 1981 £	September 1982 £	September 1983 £	September 1984 £
After 4 years' service		7,095	8,607	9,744	10,749	11,652	12,282
Inspector							
Under 1 year's service		7,095	8,607	9,744	10,749	11,652	12,282
After 1 year's service		7,320	8,880	10,053	11,088	12,018	12,666
After 2 years' service		7,605	9,225	10,443	11,520	12,489	13,164
After 3 years' service		7,833	9,501	10,755	11,862	12,858	13,551
After 4 years' service		8,058	9,774	11,064	12,204	13,230	13,994
Chief Inspector							
Under 1 year's service		8,058	9,774	11,064	12,204	13,230	13,944
After 1 year's service		8,286	10,050	11,376	12,549	13,602	14,337
After 2 years' service		8,511	10,323	11,685	12,888	13,971	14,724
After 3 years' service		8,739	10,599	11,997	13,233	14,346	15,120
After 4 years' service		8,967	10,875	12,309	13,578	14,718	15,513
Superintendent							
Under 1 year's service		11,124	13,494	15,276	16,848	18,102	18,972
After 1 year's service		11,406	13,836	15,663	17,277	18,564	19,455
After 2 years' service		11,691	14,181	16,053	17,706	19,026	19,938
After 3 years' service		11,973	14,523	16,440	18,132	19,656	20,598
Chief Superintendent							
Under 1 year's service		12,258	14,868	16,830	18,564	20,124	21,090
After 1 year's service		12,543	15,213	17,220	18,993	20,409	21,390
After 2 years' service		12,825	15,555	17,607	19,422	20,868	21,870
After 3 years' service		13,110	15,903	18,003	19,857	21,336	22,359
*Assistant Chief Constable**		14,188	17,001	19,101	21,069	22,809	†22,809
*Deputy Chief Constable**	(minimum)	15,072	17,502	19,602	21,621	23,949	†23,949
	(maximum)	18,615	20,943	22,794	25,143	27,222	†27,222
*Chief Constable**	(minimum)	18,840	21,195	23,046	25,419	27,519	†27,519
	(maximum)	23,268	26,175	28,203	31,107	33,678	†33,678
		Metropolitan Police					
Constable		—As for provincial forces—					
Sergeant		—As for provincial forces—					
Inspector							
Under 1 year's service		7,479	9,072	10,269	11,328	12,279	12,942
After 1 year's service		7,689	9,327	10,557	11,643	12,621	13,302
After 2 years' service		7,962	9,657	10,932	12,057	13,071	13,776
After 3 years' service		8,205	9,951	11,265	12,426	13,470	14,196
After 4 years' service		8,445	10,242	11,595	12,789	13,863	14,613
Chief Inspector							
Under 1 year's service		8,445	10,242	11,595	12,789	13,863	14,613
After 1 year's service		8,655	10,497	11,883	13,107	14,208	14,976
After 2 years' service		8,877	10,767	12,189	13,443	14,571	15,357
After 3 years' service		9,114	11,055	12,513	13,803	14,961	15,768
After 4 years' service		9,348	11,340	12,837	14,160	15,348	16,176
Superintendent							
Under 1 year's service		11,871	14,400	16,302	17,982	19,323	20,250
After 1 year's service		11,973	14,523	16,440	18,132	19,482	20,418
After 2 years' service		12,066	14,637	16,569	18,276	19,638	20,580
After 3 years' service		12,156	14,745	16,692	18,411	19,959	20,916
Chief Superintendent							
Under 1 year's service		12,519	15,186	17,190	18,960	20,553	21,540
After 1 year's service		12,792	15,516	17,565	19,374	20,817	21,816
After 2 years' service		13,080	15,867	17,961	19,812	21,288	22,311
After 3 year's service		13,365	16,212	18,351	20,241	21,750	22,794
Commander‡		14,442	17,289	19,428	21,429	23,199	†23,199
Deputy Assistant Commissioner‡		17,592	19,791	21,681	23,913	25,890	†25,890
Assistant Commissioner‡		21,990	24,738	26,694	29,442	31,875	†31,875
Deputy Commissioner‡		24,192	27,216	29,364	32,388	35,064	†35,064

* There are no incremental scales for these ranks. The salaries of Chief Constables and Deputy Chief Constables are based on the population of the force area.
† Pay increases from 1 September 1984 are being negotiated.
‡ There are no incremental scales for these ranks.

Racial Harassment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to raise the level of publicity in respect of the prevention of racial harassment in conjunction with the Greater London council and the Metropolitan police in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We will continue to take every opportunity to express publicly the Government's concern about racial harassment, and the need for all concerned to co-operate to reduce this evil. We particularly welcome the recent announcement by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that effective action against racial attacks is to be one of six operational priorities for 1985.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to establish special advisory centres in the inner and east London areas for citizens from ethnic minority groups who are the victims of racial assaults.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Advisory centres of this kind are most likely to be effective when organised locally to meet local needs. I understand that there already exists in inner and east London victim support schemes, law centres, citizens advice bureaux and local community groups to which the victims of crime can turn to for assistance.

Communicntions (Surveillance)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether his current arrangements for interception of communications extend to the surveillance of data stored on, and transmitted to and from, computers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list his powers to authorise the surveillance of data bases and communications other than via the post and telephone communications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: My powers to authorise under warrant the interception of communications extend only to the postal and public telecommunications systems, but cover any form of communication in those systems, including the transmission through them of computer data. I have no such powers to authorise access to data stored on computers or to other forms of data base.

Syrian Embassy Officials (Car Bomb Deaths)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any person or persons was ever charged in relation to the death by a car bomb in London of two Syrian embassy officials on 31 December 1977; and whether Metropolitan police inquiries into those deaths have been concluded.

Mr. Brittan: Police inquiries into this incident have been concluded. There have been no charges. No third party is thought to have been involved in this incident.

Intex 85

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will explain the purpose of the exercise Intex 85 and its relationship to Wintex-Cimex 85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Intex 85 is an international exercise intended primarily for national warning and monitoring organisations. There is no connection with Wintex-Cimex 85.

ENVIRONMENT

Inner Cities

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the Government have to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of their programmes for the inner city areas; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The Government are making a very substantial contribution to help improve economic and social conditions in deprived urban areas. They are determined to improve both the cost-effectiveness of the various departmental spending programmes and the co-ordination of Departments' efforts. Therefore, the Government are setting up five teams to be called city action teams which will comprise the regional directors of the Departments of Environment and Trade and Industry, and Employment-Manpower Services Commission. One team will serve the three London inner city partnership areas (Hackney, Islington and Lambeth) and there will be separate teams for the partnership areas of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester-Salford, and Newcastle-Gateshead.

The three Departments will share the leadership of the teams to reflect the joint commitment of Departments to improve the delivery of urban policy. The Department of the Environment will lead two of the teams, the Department of Trade and Industry two and Employment-MSC one. The extension of the teams' work to other urban areas will be considered as experience develops. Further details of the teams and their leadership will be announced shortly.

The task of each team will be to secure improved co-operation between Departments in developing and implementing their policies and programmes reflecting the local circumstances in the partnership areas. They will work closely with the local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors. They will build on and strengthen the existing working arrangements, for example between Government Departments and the local authorities through present partnership links. Within the framework of departmental policies the teams will establish priorities relevant to the needs of each area; they will establish joint arrangements for co-ordinating departmental programmes; they will monitor systematically the output from local programmes and projects; they will develop opportunities for joint funding between departmental programmes; and they will provide a point of contact for external sources of finance.

The scale of existing financial resources being provided for the partnership areas through many Government programmes is substantial in recognition of the many special problems which they face as a result of long-term structural, economic and social change. In 1984-85 the partnership areas are expected to receive over £130 million through the urban programme; the MSC expects to spend of the order of £100 million on employment and training measures; and DTI expects to spend some £35 million on assistance to industry. The review of the regional policy map last November brought two more partnership areas within the scope of regional assistance to industry. These resources, and the measures announced today, will help to ensure maximum opportunity for all concerned to release the skills, energy and physical resources in our cities.

Complementary to the initiative for city action teams, but serving a separately defined purpose, I propose to establish a new unit within my Department to be called the Urban Housing Renewal Unit and be headed by an assistant secretary. Its task will be to advise local authorities on ways of promoting on council estates a greater degree of private investment, a wider variety of tenure and more effective and efficient management. For this purpose it will draw on the expertise of the priority estates project and of the Department's housing services adviser and will bring in expertise from the private sector. Its activities will not be restricted to the partnership areas.

Domestic Rate Revaluation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue the consultation paper on domestic rate revaluation proposed in Cmnd. 9008.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government on 28 November, at column 506.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will disregard local authority money devoted to meeting the costs of children's school meals and housing benefits awarded to families in regions affected by the coal dispute when calculating penalty levels for overspending.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend will consider the representations to this effect which he has received.

Thames Water Authority (Chairman)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he was aware of the prior interest of the present chairman of the Thames water authority in the Perry Oaks sludge works when he appointed him as chairman of the authority.

Mr. Gow: The chairman of the Thames water authority had no interest in the Perry Oaks sludge treatment works before his present appointment.

Water Authorities (Chairmen)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guideline he uses in choosing chairmen of water authorities; and whether candidates can be excluded from consideration by virtue of policies towards property of those authorities held by applicants in previous roles.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend appoints chairmen who possess the personal and professional qualities which will enable them to lead successfully an executive board of a major commercial enterprise in the public sector.

Water Metering (Advisory Committee)

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what terms of reference he has given to the advisory committee on universal water metering.

Mr. Gow: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 19 November 1984, at column 31.

Mr. Kenneth Highfield (Appeal)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the appeal lodged by Mr. Kenneth Highfield of Anchor House, Stafford Street, Stone, Staffordshire, against the decision by the Stafford borough council, application No. 16777 of 12 December 1984 in respect of signs to be erected at Anchor House, 19 Stafford Street, Stone, will be heard.

Mr. MacFarlane: There is not expected to be a hearing for this appeal, because Mr. Highfield's agent has asked for it to be decided by means of written representations and an inspection of the site. As soon as the parties have completed their respective representations, the site inspection will take place, and my right hon. Friend's decision will be issued as quickly as possible.

Rent Act 1977

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Pocock *v.* Steel, he proposes to seek to amend the wording of case 11 of schedule 15 to the Rent Act 1977, to enable householders who have let their homes whilst living abroad on business to recover possession on their return to the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on Wednesday 20 February, at column 489.

Capital Allocations (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the capital allocations for the city of Manchester for the four main expenditure blocks, education, housing (housing investment programme), social services and the other services blocks for 1985-86 compare, in money and real terms, with those for 1984-85; and if he will give the percentage change in value in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is as follows:

City of Manchester: capital allocations

	1984-85 £000	1985-86 £000	Per cent. change in money terms	Per cent. change in real terms*
Education	6,997	7,450	+6·5	+1·9
Housing	40,499	36,050	−11·0	−14·8
Personal Social Services	1,163	371	−68·1	−69·5
Other services	2,930	2,344	−20·0	−23·4
Total	51,589	46,215	−10·4	−14·3

* The changes in real terms assume a 4½ per cent. increase in the GDP deflator in 1985-86 (as stated in the 1984 Autumn Statement).

The allocations for 1985-86 will be increased by 5 per cent. across all service blocks if the city of Manchester complies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's request for restraint on capital expenditure in 1984-85.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any studies have been brought to his attention which indicate that fluoride when added to the water supplies has a corrosive or degenerative effect on the vessels through which it passes.

Mr. Macfarlane: No. Fluoridation schemes have been in operation in various parts of the country for up to 30 years and there is no evidence that the addition of fluoride at a concentration of one part per million has had any effect on the corrosive properties of the water. An American water works association manual on fluoridation states that there has been no reported instance of pipeline corrosion in the United States traceable to the fluoride content of water.

Housing (Statistics)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number and percentage of houses in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally which require repairs costing more than £2,500;

(2) what is his estimate of the number and percentage of houses in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally which *(a)* lack basic amenities, such as hot and cold running water, *(b)* suffer from dampness, *(c)* suffer from poor drainage, and *(d)* suffer from inadequate daylight.

Sir George Young: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Local authorities' 1984 housing investment programme returns included, for 1 April, their estimates of defective dwellings in their areas: the figures provided by Coventry and estimates for the West Midlands region and for England, including allowance for any missing returns, are as follows:

	Coventry	West Midlands region	England
Substandard dwellings:			
unfit;	918	98,900	594,000
fit but lacking one or more basic amenities	5,879	78,900	637,000
Non-substandard dwellings in need of renovation†	14,091	275,500	2,282,000

* A dwelling is deemed to be unfit if it is not reasonably suitable for occupation because it is so far defective in one or more specified matters which include repair, freedom from damp, natural lighting and drainage and sanitary conveniences.

† Requiring repairs of more than £3,000 (£4,200 in Greater London) at 1984 prices.

Numbers reported by local authorities are not necessary comparable, as their criteria differ and in total they are not consistent with estimates from the English house condition survey of 1981.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Leeward Islands Air Transport

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he asked the European Commission to give its reasons for rejecting the request of Leeward Islands Air Transport for support in purchasing Super 748s; when he expects to receive a reply; if he will ask the European Court to examine the Commission's reasons for its decision; and if he will publish the Commission's reply in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Raison: Our permanent representative to the European Communities wrote to the Commission on 20 December. The Commission replied on 22 February, and we are now considering what further steps we might take. The text of its reply is as follows:

"Dear Sir Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 1984 in which you raise the question of the selection of replacement aircraft for LIAT under the EDF financed project.

I entirely share your view as regards the importance of maintaining harmonious relations between the Community and the Caribbean States on the eve of the Lomé III programming exercise. It is precisely for this reason that in recent months the Commission has gone to great lengths to explain its position, and the reasons for this position, through meetings with LIAT/CDB, press conferences and press releases.

The Commission's conclusions are based on a series of economic and financial analyses carried out by its services, assisted by independent experts. The technical aspects of the project, in particular the question of the possible risks of new technology, have been subject to similar in-depth examination. In connection with the meetings between LIAT/CDB and the Commission services, hearings were arranged with the British and French manufacturers.

The rules and principles, as laid down in the Lomé Convention, which have governed the Commission's handling of the LIAT project, are identical to those applied to other EDF projects in the past. Strict adherence to these rules has made it possible for the Commission to maintain a high degree of objectivity and integrity even in complicated and difficult cases, and in the face of pressure from private and public quarters.

The disparity to which you refer between the Commission's conclusions and those of LIAT/CDB are to be attributed to the fact that a scrupulous examination of the LIAT/CDB figures, calculations and assumptions, carried out by the Commission services and its experts, revealed errors and discrepancies which generally favoured BA 748s. I would, however, like to point out that even when applying a number of decisive assumptions (e.g. the anticipated rate of increase in the number of passengers), which are considered by the Commission services to be unrealistic, the French/Italian ATR 42 emerged as the economically most advantageous choice, albeit with a smaller margin. When applying more realistic assumptions, the advantage of the ATR 42 became pronounced.

The LIAT case is not the only one in which the Commission's conclusions differ from those of the recipient country or regional organisation. You will recall the Amarti Diversion project in Ethiopia, when the Commission, contrary to the initial opinion of the recipient government, maintained that the offer made by the British contractor was the economically most advantageous solution.

I think you will agree that any deviation from the rules and procedures applied by the Commission in such cases would constitute a serious risk of damaging the credibility of the Commission and expose it to severe criticism from the Community and its ACP partners."

Save the Children Fund

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list Her Majesty's Government's contributions to the funding of the Save the Children Fund in each of the last six years to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Raison: The following Government Departments have made contributions to the Save the Children Fund over the past six years.

The Overseas Development Administration, for specific overseas projects and for refugee and disaster relief:

	£
1978-79	170,000
1979-80	320,000
1980-81	420,000
1981-82	420,000
1982-83	650,000
1983-84	1,000,000

The Department of Health and Social Security, for a variety of projects in England:

	£
1979-80	43,125
1980-81	91,250
1981-82	269,625
1982-83	164,900
1983-84	346,306

The Home Office, towards the cost of receiving Vietnamese refugees: £1,608,232 between July 1979 and June 1982.

The following Government Departments in Northern Ireland—Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Economic Development and the Northern Ireland Office.

For the work of the Save the Children Fund in Northern Ireland:

	£
1979-80	31,246
1980-81	31,900
1981-82	59,769
1982-83	70,698
1983-84	187,810

The Scottish Education Department, Social Work Services Group—for the work of Save the Children Fund in Scotland:

	£
1979-80	231
1980-81	324
1981-82	234

SCOTLAND

Hypothermia

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State fo Scotland how many people died from hypothermia i Scotland in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The provisional figure for death in Scotland in 1984 with any mention of hypothermia a a cause is 174. There were 51 deaths in which hypothermi was the underlying cause; in the remaining 123 cases hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate bu was not considered to be the underlying cause of death.

Pharmacists (Drugs)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotlan what consultation procedures he proposes to have wit retail pharmacists in Scotland over their curren stockholdings of drugs which will no longer be availabl on the National Health Service.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall be meeting representative of pharmacists in Scotland on Wednesday 27 February fo further discussions on the implications of limiting th range of products available under the NHS.

Schools (Micro-computers)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State fo Scotland if he has any plans to revoke the decision t exclude special schools from his scheme to introduce micro-computers into schools.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

The only direct financial support provided by centra Government to help schools buy micro-computers has been provided through three schemes run by the Department of Trade and Industry, the last of which finished in December 1984. Special schools were eligible to apply for support under all these schemes, on the same basis as any other school, and many have done so. There is no question, therefore, of special schools being excluded from Government support.

In addition, an extensive pack of software, designed fo use in special education, is being made available free of charge to local education authorities throughout the United Kingdom for distribution to special schools and units. This pack is being provided by joint funding arrangements between my Department and the United Kingdom education departments.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

MBFR Talks

67. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 20 February at column 475 to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman).

El Salvador (Personnel Training)

68. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he has offered to the Government of El Salvador for the training of military personnel.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on 15 February at column 302.

Arms Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will restrict the value of United Kingdom arms exports to the Third world to below the level of United Kingdom development assistance to the Third world.

Mr. Luce: There is no link between arms exports and levels of development assistance.

All arms sales are subject to export licence control. It would not be sensible to deny to our customers the arms they judge necessary to be able to defend themselves. They are sovereign states with the right of self defence under article 51 of the UN charter and the right to decide their own expenditure priorities.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on international negotiations to limit the supply of arms to the Third world.

Mr. Luce: We support the conclusions of the United Nations study on all aspects of the conventional arms race and conventional disarmament. The study proposed that

"major suppliers and recipients engage in consultations to explore possible bases for reaching agreements to restrain the transfer of arms;"

and that

"any such arrangement would need to be accompanied by wider supplier/recipient negotiations, perhaps on a regional basis."

Arms Transfers

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international negotiations on conventional arms transfers have taken place in the past decade; and with what results.

Mr. Luce: In 1977 and 1978 conventional arms transfer talks were held between the United States and the Soviet Union, without a successful outcome. In 1981 the United Nations General Assembly mandated a group of experts to study, on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General,

"All aspects of the Conventional Arms Race and Conventional Disarmament."

A United Kingdom expert participated in this study.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the members of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and of its subsidiary bodies; whether they receive any remuneration for these duties; and what qualifications they have for being appointed to this body or its subsidiaries.

Mr. Renton: The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council was established to provide a flexible framework for meetings at Prime Ministerial, Ministerial and official level. The steering committee and the co-ordinating committee of the council are chaired by senior United Kingdom officials and their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. The council is not permanently staffed but draws on the expertise of officials as appropriate to the subjects under discussion. As these discussions form part of their duties officials receive no additional remuneration.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent meetings between members of his Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council.

Mr. Renton: Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office attended the last meeting of the co-ordinating committee of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council which took place on 14 September 1984 at which officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Irish Republic were also present. Discussions at the meeting mainly concerned preparations for the Anglo-Irish summit which was held on 19 November 1984. There are regular meetings between officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth office and those of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Irish Republic on a wide range of matters of mutual concern.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scientific Research

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he intends to achieve the Government's general aim to maintain and enhance the quality of public funded scientific research and its appropriateness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend intends to achieve the Government's general aim to maintain and enhance the quality of public-funded scientific research and its appropriateness by:

greater concentration and selectivity of research activities
better management, yielding greater value for money
increased flexibility, enabling faster response to new scientific opportunities
closer and better working with industry.

The Government's expenditure plans, as set out in Cmnd. 9428, provide for additional provision of £18 million over the next three years to re-equip selected university research departments to the highest standards. The plans also provide for an additional £27 million for the research councils and other science Vote-funded bodies to help to increase their flexibility; and to allow them to finance more top quality research proposals and to acquire and exploit more fully major equipment and facilities. The research councils have agreed to prepare corporate plans this year which will involve systematic review of their priorities, programmes and management. I am having regular meetings with the heads of the research councils individually to discuss these plans; measures to secure better value for money and the operation of the peer review system. My right hon. Friend is trying to bring the research laboratory and industry closer together encouraging academic researchers to undertake contract work for industry and by giving them greater incentive to exploit the commercial potential of their inventions.

Human Embryos (Research)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which headings on pages 88 and 89 of the 1983-84 annual report of the Medical Research Council relate to or involve (1) research upon human embryos, (2) research into genetic disorders of (i) human beings, (ii) animals, (3) research into genetic manipulation of (iii) human beings, (iv) animals and (4) research into *(a)* the prevention, *(b)* the detection and *(c)* the cure of (x) infertility of male human beings and also of female human beings and (y) congenital defects of human beings, (5) research upon human embryos for the purposes of each of the matters set out in (4) above and (6) research other than on human embryos for the purposes of each of the matters set out in (4) above; and if he will specify each such heading, provide a comprehensive breakdown of the expenditure incurred by the Medical Research Council in respect of (1) to (5) above and of the research involved and how it has been incurred and to whom such payments have been made.

Mr. Brooke: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Many details of research supported by the Medical Research Council are contained in the council's handbook for 1984-85, copies of which are in the Library.

Further Education (Local Authority Expenditure)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the level of local authority current spending on the maintained sector of advanced further education for each year since 1978-79 in constant 1983-84 prices, excluding adjustments made to take account of the loss of fee income from the reduction in tuition fees for home students in that year.

Sir Keith Joseph: The following table shows local authority expenditure on advanced further education, net of all income, in each financial year since 1978-79, adjusted for the reduction in the home undergraduate tuition fee in 1982-83 and its freezing in 1983-84:

Financial year	*£ million 1983-84 real terms**
1978-79	572
1979-80	566
1980-81	556
1981-82	560
1982-83	563
†1983-84	553
‡1984-85	525

* Real terms expenditure has been obtained by using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.

The net figures, however, give a misleading impression of the trend in expenditure since the rapid growth in student numbers over the period (some 30 per cent.) led to increasing fee income. The best indication of the movement of expenditure is given by spending gross of income. This was in each year as follows:

Financial year	*£ million 1983-84 real terms*
1978-79	744
1979-80	732
1980-81	749
1981-82	786
1982-83	802
*1983-84	808
†1984-85	778

* Provisional.
† Estimated.

Lecturers (Pay)

Mr. Hordern asked the Secretary of State Education and Science if he will publish the cost of salaries of university lecturers and express them as proportion of total expenditure in universities each y since 1978-79.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of salaries of clinical and no clinical academic staff paid from general univers expenditure (that is all recurrent expenditure excludi research grants and contracts and expenditure on oth services rendered to outside bodies) is as follows:

Academic year	*Salaries of clinical and non-clinical academic staff £ million*	*Percentage of general expenditure*
1978-79	325	37·1
1979-80	402	38·1
1980-81	512	39·0
1981-82	537	37·8
1982-83	549	35·8

During this period the scope of general expenditu increased, primarily to include a higher proportion capital provision, the funding of student unions a additional provision for redundancy and early retireme compensation.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Hordern asked the Secretary of State f Education and Science if he will publish the cost teachers' salaries in each year since 1978-79 and t proportion they were to total expenditure on education each year.

Mr. Dunn: The expenditure since 1979 by loc education authorities in England on the salaries of scho teachers as a proportion of thier total net expenditure schools is as follows:—

	Expenditure on teachers' salaries (£ million cash) (a)*	*Total net Expenditure on Schools (£ million cash) (b)*	*Column (a) percentage Column (per cen*
1978-79	2,709	4,553	59
1979-80	3,066	5,205	58
1980-81	3,880	6,371	60
1981-82	4,302	6,972	61
1982-83	4,550	7,374	61
1983-84†	4,760	7,676	62

* Expenditure on teachers' salaries includes employers' contributi towards national insurance and superannuation.
† The 1983-84 figures are provisional, pending the receipt from local education authorities of expenditure data for that year.

Research Councils (Expenditure)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the annual expenditure by each of the research councils, expressed both in real and current terms, for each year since 1978-79; and what is the projected expenditure on a similar basis for the next three years.

Mr. Brooke: The following tables show the information requested. The cash terms figures (table 1) represent actual expenditures for the years up to 1983-84, the planned cash provisions for 1984-85 and 1985-86 (subject, in the case of 1985-86, to parliamentary approval of the Supply Estimates in due course), and the amounts provisionally recommended by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils for 1986-87 and 1987-88. Final advice on the distribution of the science budget in 1986-87 will be given to my right hon. Friend in late 1985, and for 1987-88 in late 1986.

The cost terms figures (table 2) have been derived from the figures in table 1 by applying the GDP deflator, using 1983-84 as the base year.

Table 1—Research Councils' Annual Expenditure—Cash Terms—£ million

Research Council	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Agricultural and Food Research Council	26·3	29·5	37·5	42·1	43·6	46·0	46·5	50·3	49·7	47·5
Economic and Social Research Council	15·8	16·8	20·3	20·7	20·9	22·4	22·0	23·6	23·5	23·9
Medical Research Council	47·1	57·3	72·7	*101·7	107·5	113·7	117·2	122·3	125·0	128·3
Natural Environment Research Council	32·1	36·6	46·7	54·3	58·0	62·5	65·9	67·3	67·7	69·1
Science and Engineering Research Council	153·3	175·6	204·0	216·8	234·4	254·5	278·8	298·0	305·0	311·6

* The large increase in MRC's expenditure in 1981-82 was due to the transfer of commissioning money from the Health Departments to the grant-in-aid.

Table 2—Research Councils' Annual Expenditure—Cost Terms—£ million

Research Council	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Agricultural and Food Research Council	44·7	42·9	45·9	46·9	45·5	46·0	44·4	45·9	43·7	40·4
Economic and Social Research Council	26·8	24·4	24·9	23·1	21·8	22·4	21·0	21·6	20·6	20·3
Medical Research Council	80·0	83·2	89·0	†113·3	112·2	113·7	111·9	111·7	109·8	109·2
Natural Environment Research Council	54·5	53·2	57·2	60·5	60·6	62·5	62·9	61·5	59·5	58·8
Science and Engineering Research Council	260·3	255·1	249·8	241·4	244·7	254·5	266·2	272·2	267·9	265·1

† See footnote to Table 1.

Special Residential Schools (Recruitment Procedures)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he intends to issue to special residential schools accommodating young children with learning difficulties in respect of recruitment procedures relating to children of secondary age grouping.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue general guidance. If the hon. Lady knows of any particular school which is experiencing difficulties, and would write to me with the details, I shall see whether I can help to resolve them.

Buildings (Safety Hazards)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he intends to issue to universities, polytechnics and colleges of further and higher education in respect of overcrowding in buildings, lecture rooms and laboratories in connection with safety hazards.

Mr. Brooke: None. University, polytechnic and college authorities, in common with employers in general, have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 towards the safety both of their employees and of others who use their premises; and they are aware of this. Publications from the Department give guidance on achieving good practice in the provision and use of teaching accommodation.

School Conversion and Building Projects

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, region by region, the number of school conversion or building projects in which his Department's architects have been involved since 1981.

Mr. Dunn: Statutory approvals of particulars of individual school building projects, whether for new provision or at existing schools, were given as listed below under section 14(1) of the Education Act 1980 or under regulations in force at the time. The Department's architects are normally involved in the consideration of all such proposals.

Region	Number of Projects		
	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
East Anglia	14	15	31
Eastern	10	33	26
Greater London	21	73	64
Midlands	26	48	70
Northern	19	62	52
North Midlands	30	30	44
North Western	47	95	103
South Eastern	19	41	62
Southern	20	19	45
South Western	30	46	56
Yorkshire and Humberside	25	49	45

In addition, since 1981, architects engaged in development work in the Department's architects and building group have been involved with local authorities on school building projects as follows:

Region	Number of projects
East Anglia	1
Eastern	1
Greater London	—
Midlands	1
Northern	1
North Midlands	7
North Western	1
South Eastern	—
Southern	2
South Western	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	—

Arts Teaching

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assistance he proposes to give to the school curriculum development committee in promoting arts teaching in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The school curriculum development committee, which is funded jointly by the Department and the local authority associations, has recently announced that it is to spend £300,000 on a new curriculum development project to give practical support to primary and secondary schools in developing effective curricula in the arts for all pupils.

Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Graduates

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of graduates of electrical and mechanical engineering in each single year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The number of university and CNAA first degree graduates of electrical and mechanical engineering in Great Britain were as follows:

	Number
1979	5,308
1980	5,434
1981	5,973
1982	6,043

The number of CNAA first degree graduates in 1983 is not yet available. The number of university first degree graduates in 1983 was 4,359 compared with 4,159 in 1982.

Sex Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Educati and Science what assessment he has made of t implications of the judgment in the Court of Appeal in t Gillick case for the circumstances in which schools m provide sex education and the nature of the educati which may be provided; if he has given any guidance local education authorities on this matter; and if he w make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department of Health and Soci Security is appealing to the House of Lords against t judgments of the Court of Appeal in this case. Pending t outcome of this appeal, it would not be appropriate for m right hon. Friend to comment on the matter: it is for loc education authorities and schools, which are responsib for the provision of sex education, to assess the extent which the Court of Appeal's judgments have implicatio for that provision. The Court of Appeal's decision w brought to the attention of local authorities's and others b a circular issued by the DHSS on 21 December 1984.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Educati and Science if he will make a statement on the visit of t Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Memb for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke to Liverpool.

Mr. Brooke: The visit, which was confined Liverpool Polytechnic and made at the invitation of i rector, was part of a regular series of visits by me to high education institutions. It enabled me to see at first ha some of the excellent work of the polytechnic.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sedition and Conspiracy

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General o how many occasions in the last 30 years he or the Direct of Public Prosecutions has authorised the initiation proceedings for *(a)* sedition and *(b)* conspiracy, dividi this category by type of offence; and if he will make statement.

The Attorney-General: In 1973 the Director of Publ Prosecutions instituted proceedings against three perso for offences which included seditious conspiracy a uttering seditious words but the count of the indictme alleging seditious conspiracy was allowed to lie on the fi and not tried. The DPP has instituted no other proceedin for sedition in the past 30 years. The information soug in relation to prosecutions for conspiracy is not availab for the full period and to the extent that it is available cou be collated only at disproportionate expense.

Criminal Prosecutions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General i pursuant to the Answer of 19 November, *Official Repor* column *57*, he will publish in the *Official Report* h guidelines for the initiation of criminal prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to m answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gort

(Mr. Kaufman) on 18 February 1985 at, at column 326. The guidelines referred to therein are those referred to in my hon. Friend's question.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make it his policy to set the grant to the British Overseas Trade Board at a level that provides the same purchasing power in future years as the £27·5 million provided in 1984-85;

(2) what is his policy towards the British Overseas Trade Board and its funding.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend values the work of the British Overseas Trade Board (though its activities, like those of all parts of his Department, are of course kept under continuing review). But it cannot be totally exempt from measures to restrain public expenditure. Its budget of £27·5 million for 1984-85 is expected to be broadly maintained in cash terms over the next three years.

Exports (Promotion)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with measures taken by his Department and other Government agencies to promote British exports.

Mr. Channon: Yes. Through the British Overseas Trade Board the Government provide a wide range of services for exporters.

International Telecommunications Union

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who represents the United Kingdom on the International Telecommunications Union; and what information he has about forthcoming meetings of that body.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Trade and Industry represents the United Kingdom at all major meetings of the International Telecommunication Union, including the plenipotentiary conference, the administrative council, administrative radio conferences, the plenary assembly of the International Radio Consultative Committee and, generally, the plenary assembly of the International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee. Further information on the arrangements for United Kingdom representation at the ITU and other international telecommunication organisations is contained in a paper on this subject placed in the Library of the House on 26 July 1984.

ITU meetings scheduled for 1985 include the administrative council in July and a world administrative radio conference in August. Meetings of CCIR and CCITT study groups take place regularly throughout the year.

In addition, I understand that the recent report of the Independent Commission for World-Wide Telecommunications Development is likely to be discussed at the administrative council in July and possibly at other meetings to be arranged for that purpose.

Hertfordshire

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance is available to industry from his Department in the Welwyn Hatfield constituency and in the county of Hertfordshire.

Mr. Trippier: Information on assistance available to industry from my Department is contained in the booklet "How to Make Your Business Grow", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what grounds the proposed clothing, footwear and textiles scheme for technological investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries has been disallowed by the European Economic Community;

(2) if he will outline the major proposals of the clothing, footwear and textile scheme for investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries; and which of its provisions were objected to by the European Economic Community;

(3) what has been the total amount of Government investment in each of the following industries in the latest year for which figures are available; and what rate per 1,000 employees in each of the following industries this figure represents *(a)* the coal mining industry, *(b)* the steel industry, *(c)* motor vehicle manufacture, *(d)* the computer manufacturing industry and *(e)* the clothing, footwear and textile industry;

(4) what plans he now has for Government investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries;

(5) what information he has concerning the current annual levels of Government investment in the textile industries of each of the member countries of the European Economic Community;

(6) what reasons the European Commission gave to his Department for its refusal to approve the implementation of the clothing, footwear and textiles (CLOFT) scheme for investment in the United Kingdom; if he has any alternative proposals for investment assistance in these industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in yarns, fabrics and garments, respectively, in the years from 1979 to 1984;

(2) what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in textiles and clothing and the overall trade balance in manufactures with Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Macao in 1979 to 1984;

(3) what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in textiles and clothing and the overall trade balance in manufactures with the Association of South East Asian Nation countries in the years 1979 to 1984;

(4) in how many multi-fibre arrangement product categories multi-fibre arrangement suppliers increased

their utilisation of their quotas to the United Kingdom by 10 per cent. or more in 1983 compared with 1982, and in 1984 compared with 1983;

(5) how many times the anti-surge mechanism in the multi-fibre arrangement bilateral agreements was used in 1983 and 1984; and on how many occasions other EEC member states utilised the anti-surge mechanism in the same period;

(6) in which multi-fibre arrangement group I product categories, the individual quotas to the United Kingdom for Macao, Taiwan and South Korea, respectively, exceeded 1 per cent. of total United Kingdom imports of the product concerned in 1980;

(7) in which multi-fibre arrangement group I product categories, the quotas to the United Kingdom of the non-dominant multi-fibre arrangement suppliers exceeded 2·5 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total imports of the products concerned in 1980;

(8) what were the levels of the voluntary export restraints from Portugal and Spain to the United Kingdom of textile and clothing products for 1983 and 1984; and what were the actual levels of exports to t Kingdom from these sources in each produc concerned in these years;

(9) what have been the levels of United exports and imports of yarns, fabrics and respectively, and the resulting crude trade ba Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, Egypt and Tunisia in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Memb as possible.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Industry if he will publish in the *Offici* information on those cases where the basket ext used by the United Kingdom in 1983 and 1984 to new quotas on textile and clothing products ind the countries involved, *(b)* the products involv trigger level for imports in each case, *(d)* the quo and *(e)* actual levels of imports into the United of the products concerned in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Trippier: The information is as follow

(a) Supplier country	*(b) Product (MFA category)*	*(c) Trigger level*	*(d) Agreed quota*	*(e) Imp*
1983				
Macao	Knitted trousers (28)	12,000 pieces	85,000 pieces for 1983 4 per cent. growth 1984/5/6	106,76
Indonesia	Woven fabric of man-made fibres (3)	79·5 tonnes	740 tonnes for 1984 2 per cent. growth 1985-86	554·1 t
Taiwan	Women's woven underwear (excluding nightwear) (30B)	1·2 tonnes	3 tonnes (15 September 1983 to 31 December 1983) 10 tonnes 1984 4 per cent. growth 1985-86	26·9 to
Romania	Knitted trousers (28)	14,000 pieces	90,000 pieces (plus exceptional 15,000) for 1983 4 per cent. growth 1984/5/6	95,805
Macao	Men's and boys' coats (14B)	9,000 pieces	82,000 pieces for 1983 2 per cent. growth 1984/5/6	37,395
Thailand	Women's and girls' coats (15B)	99,000 pieces	205,000 (plus exceptional 39,000) pieces for 1983 4 per cent. growth* for 1984/5/6	203,70
Thailand	Men's and boys' woven suits (16)	39,000 pieces	111,000 (plus exceptional 30,000) pieces for 1983 5 per cent. growth 1984/5/6	144,27
Yugoslavia	Knitted shirts, T-shirts (4)	270,000 pieces	250,000 pieces (September to December 1983); 650,000 pieces for 1984 3·5 per cent. growth 1985-86	968,94
Macao	Knitted outer-garments (not elsewhere specified) (83)	19·7 tonnes	EC quota, United Kingdom share of 52 tonnes for 1983, plus one tonne per annum for 1984/5/6	42·6 to
Indonesia	Cotton cloth (2)	266·5 tonnes	1,664 tonnes for 1984 2 per cent. growth for 1985-86	1,257·5
China	Sacks and bags of poly-ethylene or poly-propylene (33)	218 tonnes†	600 tonnes for 1984 6 per cent. growth for 1985/6/7/8	524·8 t
Romania	Knitted track-suits (73)	32,000 pieces	EC quota, United Kingdom share 98,000 pieces for 1983 EC growth of 3 per cent. 1984/5/6	120,88
Yugoslavia	Men's and boys' woven jackets and blazers (17)	45,000 pieces	152,000 pieces for 1984 7 per cent. growth for 1985-86	110,41
Philippines	Women's and girls' knitted suits (74)	58,000 pieces	200,000 pieces for 1984 6 per cent. growth for 1985-86	129,62
1984				
China	Spun regenerated yarn (23)	146 tonnes	EC quota, United Kingdom share 156 tonnes for 1984 5 per cent. growth 1985/6/7/8 for EC	391·2 t
Bangladesh	Woven shirts (8)	212,000 pieces	Negotiations not yet concluded	1,035,5
Thailand	Women's woven suits (29)	44,000 pieces‡	152,000 pieces for 1984 5 per cent. growth 1985-86	96,983
Hong Kong	Corsets (86)	109,000 pieces	650,000 pieces for 1984 approximately 4 per cent. growth 1985-86	562,05
Philippines	Corsets (86)	181,000 pieces	700,000 pieces for 1985 5 per cent. growth 1986	616,23

Notes:

1. Imports may exceed the quota level in a given year for a variety of reasons. In the case of newly-introduced quotas the most likely explanatio is our obligation under GATT to admit goods in transit to the United Kingdom at the time a quota was introduced even if the quota level is thereb exceeded.

2. Strictly speaking, the quota on Chinese category 23 products was agreed in the course of negotiations for a new EC-China textiles agreemen but the trigger level had been exceeded.

* Erroneously shown as 3½ per cent. in reply to the hon. Member's question of 31 October 1984 (*Official Report* 31 October 1984, column 1008)

† Erroneously shown as 2,127·7 tonnes in the above reply.

‡ This is the finally agreed figures; at the time of the above reply only the provisional figure of 42,000 pieces was available.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the level of utilisation of the United Kingdom's multi-fibre arrangement quotas for each group I product category by each supplier country in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Channon: Utilisation of multi-fibre arrangemen group I category quotas to the United Kingdom in 1983 b supplier countries which have concluded bilater agreements with the Community on trade in textiles i shown in the following table. The final 1984 utilisatio figures are not yet available.

1983 Utilisation of Quotas (in percentage terms)

Country	*Category 1 per cent.*	*Category 2 per cent.*	*Category 3 per cent.*	*Category 4 per cent.*	*Category 5 per cent.*	*Category 6 per cent.*	*Category 7 per cent.*	*Category per cen*
Brazil	99	95	100	80	n.a.	61	9	n.a
Bulgaria	nil	9	nil	nil	100	4	nil	1
China	84	94	100	89	100	93	44	9
Colombia	72	*54		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Czechoslovakia	nil	100	9	100	42	100	nil	ni
Egypt	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	56	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Hong Kong	n.a.	99	99	92	100	100	98	10
Hungary	n.a.	100	13	16	35	68	2	6
India	n.a.	30	n.a.	90	47	42	45	5
Indonesia	n.a.	100	100	n.a.	n.a.	21	97	10
Republic of Korea	100	95	99	95	92	100	97	10
Macao	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	90	97	100	100	10
Malaysia	n.a.	*93		62	8	65	22	4
Mexico	nil	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Pakistan	94	100	n.a.	75	5	n.a.	n.a.	8
Peru	100	82	n.a.	n.a.	nil	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Philippines	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	63	59	92	78	4
Poland	n.a.	81	89	14	97	44	n.a.	1
Romania	nil	19	100	43	100	77	100	9
Singapore	n.a.	50	38	50	17	54	43	6
Sri Lanka	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4	98	10
Thailand	n.a.	*95		64	70	51	90	8
Uruguay	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Yugoslavia	95	100	64	37	51	72	84	9

* Combined quotas of Mfa categories 2 and 3.

n.a.—not applicable, as categories not subject to quota for these supplying countries.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of Portuguese and Spanish exports of yarns, fabrics and garments, respectively, in 1983 and 1984 were sent to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: Information for 1984 is incomplete. The available figures together with those for 1982 are:

Per cent.‖

	Spain	*Portugal*
*Yarns**		
1982	6·4	31·2
1983	5·7	35·4
1984 January-June	—	41·4
Fabrics†		
1982	12·1	28·2
1983	12·9	30·3
1984 January-June	—	27·1
Garments‡		
1982	4·8	19·4
1983	4·9	19·2
1984 January-June	—	19·6

* Standard International Trade Classification (rev 2) group 651 les 651.21.

† Groups 652-656 and 657.1-657.4.

‡ Division 84 less groups 848 and 847.11.

‖ Based on value.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the utilisation of quotas in multi-fibre arrangement categories 68, 71 and 80 in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Channon: The 1982 and 1983 utilisation of quotas for multi-fibre arrangement categories 68, 71 and 80 under the Community bilateral textiles agreements with supplying countries was as follows:

MFA category 68
1982: 81 per cent.
1983: 58 per cent.

MFA category 71
1982: 81 per cent.
1983: 67 per cent.

MFA category 80
1982: 93 per cent.
1983: 80 per cent.

The 1984 utilisation figures are not yet available.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the level of import penetration in the United Kingdom's yarns, fabric and garment markets in each of the years from 1979 to 1984, measuring import penetration as the share of apparent final consumption taken by imports.

Mr. Trippier: Comparable information can be provided for only textiles and clothing. This excludes man-made fibre continuous filament yarn and includes a small amount of textile products which are not yarn or fabrics, and is as follows:

Textiles and Clothing
(Class 43 and Group 453 of the Standard Industrial Classification revised 1980)

	Import penetration per cent.
1979	31
1980	32
1981	36
1982	37
1983	38
1984*	39

* Year ended June.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which product categories South American members of the multi-fibre arrangement utilised 90 per cent. or more of their multi-fibre arrangement quotas to the United Kingdom in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Channon: The following South American countries utilised 90 per cent. or more of their multi-fibre arrangement quotas to the United Kingdom in 1982 and 1983 for the product categories indicated:

Brazil
1982: MFA categories 1, 3 and 4.
1983: MFA categories 1, 2 and 3.

Peru
1982: MFA categories 1 and 2.
1983: MFA category 1.

The 1984 utilisation figures are not yet available.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which multi-fibre arrangement product categories Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka utilised 90 per cent. or more multi-fibre arrangement quotas to the United Kingdom in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Channon: In 1982 and 1983 India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka utilised 90 per cent. or more of their multi-fibre arrangement quotas to the United Kingdom for the following categories:

India
1982: MFA categories 4, 6, 15B 27 and 29.
1983: MFA categories 4, 6 and 27.

Pakistan
1982: MFA categories 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, ex10, 27 and 80.
1983: MFA categories 1, 2 and ex10.

Sri Lanka
1982: MFA category 7.
1983: MFA categories 7 and 8.

The final 1984 utilisation figures are not yet available.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the numbers employed in the United Kingdom's textile and clothing industries, the gr of these industries, and output per head in each o from 1979 to date.

Mr. Trippier: The available information is a

Textiles and Clothing
(Class 43 and Group 453 of the Standard Industrial Cla revised 1980)

	1979	*1980*	*19*
Employment (thousands)	669	592	5
Gross output (£ million)	8,717	8,158	7,8
Gross output per head (£)	13,036	13,792	15,4

Source:
Annual Censuses of Production for 1979 to 1982.
Notes:
Information for later years is not yet available.
Employment levels differ from those published by the D Employment because of a slightly different coverage. ACOP been used for consistency with those for gross output.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Industry what were the levels of investment in t Kingdom's textile and clothing industries and th of state aid for investment received by these ind each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Trippier: The available information is a

Net Capital Expenditure by textiles and clothing ind (Class 43 and Group 453 of the Standard Industrial Clas revised 1980)*

	current prices £ million
1979	263
1980	199
1981	166
1982	186

Sources: Annual Censuses of Production for 1979 to 1982.
* Net of disposals.

United Kingdom Government assistance to textiles, clot footwear industries
(Orders XIII and XV of the Standard Industrial Classificati 1968)

April 1979—April 1980	
April 1980—April 1981	
April 1981—April 1982	
April 1982—April 1983	
April 1983—April 1984	
April 1984—September 1984	

Notes:
1. Assistance is largely for investment.
2. The amounts shown are in respect of a mixture of payments and cover regional development grant, section 7 support for innovation and similar Northern Ireland scheme
3. Assistance for Northern Ireland excludes any for th sector, but separate figures for this industry are not availab Britain.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary for Trade and Industry which senior official Department were primarily involved in th discussions with the EC concerning the clothing, and textiles (CLOFT) scheme.

Mr. Trippier: It is not our practice to name i officers in this way.

TRANSPORT

New Vessels

69. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the flow of orders for new vessels by British shipowners remains adequate to meet possible future Ministry of Defence requirements in a time of emergency.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am confident that the merchant fleet is capable of meeting existing defence needs. Its future potential in this area is the subject of the joint review now being undertaken by my Department and the Ministry of Defence.

Concessionary Fares Schemes

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those authorities which are not co-operating with his plans to allow all operators of local bus services to have the right to participate in concessionary fares schemes where they are provided by the council.

Mr. David Mitchell: There is no requirement on authorities to inform the Department about the conditions under which operators are admitted to their concessionary fares schemes.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many serious and how many fatal injuries have been caused as a result of accidents involving motor cycles in each of the last three years; what action is being taken to reduce these accidents; and if, following the recommendations in the report of the Transport Committee on "Road Safety", he is considering limiting the engine sizes of motor cycles for younger riders.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

	Fatalities	*Serious injuries*
1981	1,304	20,553
1982	1,267	20,608
1983	1,073	17,715

Figures for 1984 are not yet available.

The Transport Act 1981 contained a number of measures designed to improve the safety of motor cyclists, including a reduction in the maximum size of the learner machine. I have already said that I shall be reviewing the operation of these measures. I shall give my views on the Transport Committee's recommendations on motor cycling when I make my overall response to the Committee's report.

Safety Barriers

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current total length of central safety barriers installed on motorways, trunk roads and other roads in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: The total length of central reserve safety fencing installed on motorways in England is 1,440 miles. On trunk roads in England it is approximately 220 miles. Trunk roads and motorways in Scotland and Wale are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends th Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. I have n detailed knowledge of the provision of safety fences o other roads which are dealt with by the local highwa authorities.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State fo Transport what are the parameters for the design of roa safety crash barriers.

Mrs. Chalker: Safety fences are designed to contai and safely re-direct vehicles weighing 1·5 tonne travelling at 70 mph impacting at an angle of 20 degrees

Crossover Accidents

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State fo Transport if he will give a breakdown of the number o crossover accidents by road type and list the number o fatalities for the past five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The data requested are given in th table, An article on this subject appears in "Roa Accidents Great Britain 1983"—pages 30-31—a copy o which is in the Library.

Crossover accidents and casualties by road class Great Britain 1979-83

		Accidents	*Fatal casualties*
1979	Motorways*	79	12
	A roads	607	82
	Other roads	42	2
1980	Motorways*	95	18
	A roads	603	73
	Other roads	42	1
1981	Motorways*	94	17
	A roads	606	74
	Other roads	41	1
1982	Motorways*	81	9
	A roads	614	75
	Other roads	47	4
1983	Motorways*	78	22
	A roads	530	81
	Other roads	29	2

Note:

Data are not available for the Cheshire police area before 1 April 198 or for the Metropolitan police area before 1 January 1982.

* Includes A(M) roads.

Road Maintenance Budget

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State fo Transport what rise in the non-motorway trunk roa maintenance budget would be required to prevent a increase in the blacklog of reconstruction work on th roads, as referred to in the public expenditure Whit Paper, Cmnd. 9428.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1985-86, about £30 million.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State fo Transport by what means London Regional Transpo auditors will certify expenditure totalling £37 million i

relation to unfunded liabilities of London Regional Transport, *Official Report*, 19 February, column 945, as being due for payment prior to 31 March.

Mrs. Chalker: These liabilities will appear in LRT's accounts for 1984-85, according to LRT's latest forcasts. The accounts will be certified by LRT's independent auditors in the normal way. The liabilities represent future charges on the business, for which it is standard accounting practice to make provision, which will have accrued by the end of this financial year as a result of past transactions or management decisions.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the five categories which make up the total of £37 million of accrued unfunded liabilities of London Regional Transport for the current year, *Official Report*, 19 February, column 945, the principal expenditure, together with the reasons why they require payment prior to 31 March.

Mrs. Chalker: The items are as follows:

£21 million	provision for voluntary severance payments.
£ 6 million	provision for outstanding insurance claims.
£ 4 million	provision arising from abortive work on the Jubilee Line.
£ 5 million	provision for unpaid development land tax.
£ 1 million	provision for land compensation claims.
£37 million	

The liabilities are as assessed in LRT's latest business forecasts, which may be subject to change. They do not fall to be paid in 1984-85 but will have accrued by the end of the financial year as a result of past transactions or management decisions. It is standard commercial accounting practice to make provision for liabilities.

Bus Operators (Birmingham)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Transport who are the 32 bus operators in Birmingham mentioned by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), during the debate on Second Reading of the Transport Bill, *Official Report*, 12 February, column 256.

Mr. David Mitchell: I regret that I was mistaken when, during the debate on Second Reading of the Transport Bill, I referred to the Birmingham area in order to illustrate that concessionary fare schemes involving a large number of operators could work without using tokens. I should have referred to Derbyshire, where some 28 operators participate in a pass-based scheme. I have written to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) to apologise for this error.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Youth Training

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list projects by name and indicate the number of trainees in each youth training programme and action for community employment scheme, together with the amount of public money advanced annually to each scheme operating in Antrim town which is funded by the Department of Economic Development.

Dr. Boyson: The following organisations are sponsoring projects in Antrim town:

Youth Training Programme

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved training places*	*Maximum grant aid for 1984-85* £
Antrim Community Workshop Ltd.	53	179,338
St. Comgall's Youth Community Project	30	114,000

Action for Community Employment (ACE)

Name of sponsor	*Number of approved jobs*	*Maximum grant AII for any period of 52 weeks* £
Antrim Boat Club	2	9,310
Antrim Citizens Advice Bureau	1	4,870
Antrim Borough Council	32	144,870
Antrim High School	1	3,880
Ardnaveigh High School	2	9,310
Chimney Corner Football Club	2	9,150
First Antrim Presbyterian Church	2	9,620
Greystone Road Presbyterian Church	1	4,650
Greystone Tenants' Association	1	4,650
Greystone Youth Group	1	4,390
High Street Presbyterian Church	1	4,650
Massereene Golf Club	3	14,710
Muckamore Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club	1	4,810
North Eastern Education and Library Board	2	9,830
Northern Health and Social Services Board	5	23,530
Parkhall High School	1	3,880
Rotary Club of Antrim	1	4,650
Shanes Castle	2	10,040
St. Comgall's Youth Centre	12	54,680

Mr. Thomas Power

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement detailing the total period of time for which Thomas Power has been held on remand, the number of court appearances he has made, the various charges he has faced or is facing, the charges he faced which have been dismissed, the dates on which these various charges were made or dismissed and the various dates on which Mr. Power was arrested;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining why Thomas Power has been held on remand over such a long period of time.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985, c. *503-504*]: The trial of Thomas Power for murder and other serious offences is presently proceeding at Belfast Crown court, and it would not be proper for Ministers to make any statement relating to the circumstances of this case or to any previous charges or court proceedings involving Mr. Power.

Emergency Provisions (Arrests)

Mr. Kevin McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many people were detained in the most recent full calendar year under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; and how many were charged with scheduled offences under that Act and other Acts;

(2) in respect of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, for the most recent full calendar

year, what was the yearly total of arrests made under the Act; and how many persons arrested under the Act were detained for the following periods *(a)* up to 12 hours, *(b)* 12 to 24 hours, *(c)* 24 to 36 hours, *(d)* 36 to 48 hours, *(e)* 48 to 60 hours and *(f)* 60 to 72 hours, indicating those numbers (i) not ultimately charged under the Act and released, (ii) those charged under the Act and (iii) those charged with an offence but not under the Act, indicating which offences, and (iv) those charged under the Act but not initially detained under the Act.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *712*]: One thousand three hundred and twenty six arrests were carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 241 by members of the armed forces under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 in 1984.

Figures are not available showing whether those arrested by members of the armed forces were released or handed over to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In the latter instance, such persons may subsequently have been rearrested by the police, and would therefore appear in both sets of figures.

Of those arrests carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in 1,103 of the cases the persons concerned were released without charge; in four cases persons were subsequently charged with offences under the Act only; in 10 cases persons were charged with offences under the Act as well as with other offences; and in 209 other cases persons were charged with offences under other legislation; 198 of the cases involved persons charged with scheduled offences, though details of the offences are not readily available. No-one was charged with an offence under the Act after arrest under other provisions.

Information on the length of time individuals were held under the Act could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been killed by terrorist actions in Northern Ireland in each year since 1 January 1970.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1985, c. 450]: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of deaths*
1970	20
1971	131
1972	401
1973	219
1974	203
1975	241
1976	283
1977	105
1978	71
1979	112
1980	69
1981	84
1982	85
1983	66
1984	53

The figures for 1979 to 1983 differ from those I gave the hon. Gentleman on 15 December 1983, at columns *493-95* in that deaths caused by the security forces in incidents initiated by terrorist action are not included.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Terrorists (Evidence)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General what is the total cost to the taxpayer of arrangements made to protect converted terrorist witnesses prior to the trial of persons charged on the basis of their evidence; and what are the total sums which have been spent, committed or are planned to be spent for the purposes of resettling or protecting converted terrorist witnesses following the outcome of the trials at which they provide evidence.

Mr. Hurd: I have been asked to reply.

It would not be appropriate to give precise details since they might prejudice the security of individuals; but total direct expenditure on the protection of individuals who gave evidence against former accomplices in terrorist organisations in the last seven years amounted to just over £1·3 million. This expenditure is kept at the minimum level consistent with adequate protection of those concerned. Figures for expenditure are not maintained in a form which would permit them to be broken down into pre- and post-trial expenditure without disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate what percentage the average unemployed person gets in benefits of the income he or she could expect if he or she had a job.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Precise up-to-date information on the previous or likely earnings of the unemployed is not available. However, in April 1984 the standard unemployment benefit — including child benefit but excluding any supplementary allowances — for a man with a wife and two dependent children was £57·05. This was about 37 per cent. of the average gross weekly earnings of full-time male employees working a full week for manual occupations or about 32 per cent. for all occupations. A study by the Department of Health and Social Security in autumn 1978 indicated that the average usual gross weekly earnings of full-time men currently unemployed were just under 80 per cent. of those of all currently employed men. If this relationship has not changed significantly between 1978 and 1984, the above standard unemployment benefit figure in April 1984 would probably be just over 40 per cent. of the average usual gross weekly earnings of those currently employed. This comparison does not take account of supplementary allowances which will vary from individual to individual.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what action is being taken by the Health and Safety Executive to counteract the serious level of under-reporting of toxic side effects attributed to pesticides in the farming community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Poisonous Substances in Agriculture Regulations 1984 and the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 require the reporting of incidents involving pesticides at the workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive places great emphasis on and publicises the need for the safe use and handling of pesticides and the reporting of accidents to do with them. There is no evidence of a serious level of under-reporting. All complaints about and reports of incidents involving suspected poisoning by agricultural pesticides are investigated.

Hon. Majesty's Agricultural Inspectorate's next national safety campaign, "Your Health", includes in its scope the use of pesticides and their effects on people, crops, wildlife, and the environment.

Labour Statistics

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for unemployment in Eastleigh; and how the percentage unemployed in Eastleigh compares with the national figure.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the House of Commons Library. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Disabled Persons (Employment Code)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment if the Manpower Services Commission's code of good practice on the employment of disabled people has been distributed to Government Departments and local authorities; and what measures are being taken to assess the effectiveness of the code.

Mr. Alan Clark: Copies of the code of good practice have been sent to all government Departments and the Civil Service's own code is currently being revised to take account of its recommendations. Every local authority has been supplied with copies of the code.

It is too early, as yet, to assess the effectiveness of the code, but the response to the code is being carefully monitored. Information about employers' first impressions of the code is being obtained during the first half of this year, and a more detailed evaluation is planned at a later stage when employers have had time to adjust their policies and practices where necessary to its guidance.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many copies of the Manpower Services Commission's code of good practice on the employment of disabled people have been printed; how they have been distributed; and what has been the cost of promoting the code.

Mr. Alan Clark: Sixty thousand copies of the code have been printed so far. Copies of the code have been sent to chairmen of major companies in the private sector as well as to heads of nationalised industries, local authorities, Government Departments and voluntary organisations. Forty thousand copies have been sent to members of the Manpower Services Commission's disablement advisory service for local distribution to employers, voluntary organisations and other interested bodies. The initial cost of promoting the code, including printing and distribution, has been £73,000.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people since its publication from *(a)* disability organisations and *(b)* employers.

Mr. Alan Clark: The code of good practice has been endorsed by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and by the National Advisory Council on the employment of disabled people. It has been well received by the chairmen of many major companies and by the Confederation of British Industry. It is now being widely promoted at local level to employers throughout the country by the Manpower Services Commission's disablement advisory service and the reaction so far has been very favourable. Responses will continue to be carefully monitored during the coming months.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether, since the publication of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people, there has been an increase in the number of inquiries from employees to the Disablement Advisory Service; and if he anticipates an increase in the work load of disablement resettlement officers.

Mr. Alan Clark: The code of good practice is generating a great deal of interest among employers. The disablement advisory service is promoting the code as part of its everyday work of encouraging employers to adopt good policies and practices towards disabled workers, and will monitor the level of interest and response over the coming months. It is not anticipated that the introduction of the code will directly affect the numbers of clients with whom disablement resettlement officers (DROs) deal. However, if employers respond positively to the advice in the code, the DROs will be assisted in their task of placing disabled jobseekers.

Youth Training Scheme (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown by ethnic origin of the latest available figures of those on youth training scheme courses in the Leeds area.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The numbers of young people in training on the youth training scheme at the end of January 1985 in the Leeds local authority district, presented by ethnic origin, are shown in the following table:

Ethnic origin	*In training 31 January 1985*
White/European	3,378
African/West Indian	106
Asian	63
Others	26
Total	3,573

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average earnings of workers employed in the United Kingdom's textile and clothing industries in the years 1979 to 1984; and if he will compare the increase in earnings against changes in the retail price index and increases in the earnings of all employees during this period.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much the prices of textile and clothing

products have increased since 1979, comparing these increases with changes in the retail prices index in the equivalent period.

Mr. Alan Clark: Clothing — including clothing materials — is a component of the retail prices index. Between January 1979 and January 1985 it increased by 22 per cent. compared with an increase of 74 per cent. in the "all items" index.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment what warnings are carried on containers of fluoride for addition to water supplies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Advisory Bodies (MSC)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those bodies designated as advisory bodies to the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission has the following permanent advisory bodies:

Advisory Committee on Resettlement of Ex-Regular Members of HM Forces
Area Manpower Boards
Careers Materials Advisory Committee
Committees for the Employment of Disabled People
Manpower Services Committee for Scotland
Manpower Services Committee for Wales
National Advisory Council on the Employment for Disabled People
Open Tech Programme: Steering Group
Ex-Services Resettlement Committee for Scotland
Sheltered Employment Consultative Group
Special Employment Measures Advisory Group
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative National Steering Group
Youth Training Board
Youth Training Board Advisory Group on Content and Standards
Industrial Language Training Advisory Committee

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will place in the Library copies of the Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3 and 514/3 which give information on accidents to area manpower boards, plus their supplements;

(2) if he will make a statement on the Manpower Services Commission's memorandum 511/3, Supplement 4, which gives information on accidents to area manpower boards;

(3) if he will place a copy of the Manpower Services Commission's memorandum 894/1, which deals with appraisal of youth training scheme programmes, and 894/5 which deals with accidents to young persons on the youth training scheme, in the Library;

(4) if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East given in the *Official Report*, 25 July 1984, column *661*, on fatal accidents on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Skillcentres

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment which skillcentres in the west midlands are to be affected by closure plans.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Skillcentre Training Agency plans to close its skillcentres in Castle Bromwich and Redditch, the annexe to Wolverhampton skillcentre at Dudley and its young people's training centre in Handsworth. This will allow the agency to make more cost-effective use of the skillcentres in Handsworth, Coventry and Wolverhampton, while still maintaining good geographical distribution of its facilities in the west midlands.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement about the implementation of the Government's financial management initiative in his Department.

Mr. Tom King: I have today placed in the Library a report describing the implementation of the financial management initiative within my Department during 1984. The report is also on sale to the public from my Department's headquarters.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Prime Minister what further guidance is being given to civil servants about their duties and responsibilities in relation to Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The head of the Home Civil Service, after consulting permanent secretaries, has today issued, with my consent, a note of guidance restating the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers. A copy of it is annexed to this answer.

The note does not and cannot discuss the corresponding responsibilities which Ministers have in relation to civil servants. Civil servants who carry out their duties and responsibilities in the manner described in the note by the head of the Home Civil Service are entitled to the trust, respect and support of Ministers. In the end it is Ministers who bear responsibility for the policies and decisions of Government; but no competent Minister wants his civil servants to tailor their advice to what they think the Minister wants to hear. My colleagues and I have a very high opinion of the general quality of the advice and service we receive from the Civil Service.

THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN RELATION TO MINISTERS

Note by the Head of the Home Civil Service

During the last few months a number of my colleagues have suggested to me that it would be timely to restate the general duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers. Recent events, and the public discussion to which they have given rise, have led me to conclude that the time has come when it would be right for me, as Head of the Home Civil Service, to respond to these suggestions. I am accordingly putting out the guidance in this note. It is issued after consultation with Permanent Secretaries in charge of Departments, and with their agreement.

2. Civil servants are servants of the Crown. For all practical purposes the Crown in this context means and is represented by

the Government of the day. There are special cases in which certain functions are conferred by law upon particular members or groups of members of the public service; but in general the executive powers of the Crown are exercised by and on the advice of Her Majesty's Ministers, who are in turn answerable to Parliament. The civil service as such has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly elected Government of the day. It is there to provide the Government of the day with advice on the formulation of the policies of the Government, to assist in carrying out the decisions of the Government, and to manage and deliver the services for which the Government is responsible. Some civil servants are also involved, as a proper part of their duties, in the processes of presentation of Government policies and decisions.

3. The civil service serves the Government of the day as a whole, that is to say Her Majesty's Ministers collectively, and the Prime Minister is the Minister for the Civil Service. The duty of the individual civil servant is first and foremost to the Minister of the Crown who is in charge of the Department in which he or she is serving. It is the Minister who is responsible, and answerable in Parliament, for the conduct of the Department's affairs and the management of its business. It is the duty of civil servants to serve their Ministers with integrity and to the best of their ability.

4. The British civil service is a non-political and disciplined career service. Civil servants are required to serve the duly elected Government of the day, of whatever political complexion. It is of the first importance that civil servants should conduct themselves in such a way as to deserve and retain the confidence of Ministers, and as to be able to establish the same relationship with those whom they may be required to serve in some future Administration. That confidence is the indispensable foundation of a good relationship between Ministers and civil servants. The conduct of civil servants should at all times be such that Ministers and potential future Ministers can be sure that that confidence can be freely given, and that the civil service will at all times conscientiously fulfil its duties and obligations to, and impartially assist, advise and carry out the policies of, the duly elected Government of the day.

5. The determination of policy is the responsibility of the Minister (within the convention of collective responsibility of the whole Government for the decisions and actions of every member of it). In the determination of policy the civil servant has no constitutional responsibility or role, distinct from that of the Minister. Subject to the conventions limiting the access of Ministers to papers of previous administrations, it is the duty of the civil servant to make available to the Minister all the information and experience at his or her disposal which may have a bearing on the policy decisions to which the Minister is committed or which he is preparing to make, and to give to the Minister honest and impartial advice, without fear or favour, and whether the advice accords with the Minister's view or not. Civil servants are in breach of their duty, and damage their integrity as servants of the Crown, if they deliberately withhold relevant information from their Minister, or if they give their Minister other advice than the best they believe they can give, or if they seek to obstruct or delay a decision simply because they do not agree with it. When, having been given all the relevant information and advice, the Minister has taken a decision, it is the duty of civil servants loyally to carry out that decision with precisely the same energy and good will, whether they agree with it or not.

6. Civil servants are under an obligation to keep the confidences to which they become privy in the course of their official duties; not only the maintenance of trust between Ministers and civil servants but also the efficiency of government depend on their doing so. There is and must be a general duty upon every civil servant, serving or retired, not to disclose, in breach of that obligation, any document or information or detail about the course of business, which has come his or her way in the course of duty as a civil servant. Whether such disclosure is done from political or personal motives, or for pecuniary gain, and quite apart from liability to prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts, the civil servant concerned forfeits the trust that is put in him or her as a servant of the Crown, and may well forfeit the right to continue in the service. He or she also undermines the confidence that ought to subsist between Ministers and civil servants and thus damages colleagues and the Service as well as him or herself.

7. The previous paragraphs have set out the basic principl which govern civil servants' relations with Ministers. The rest this note deals with particular aspects of conduct which deri from them, where is may be felt that more detailed guidan would be helpful.

8. A civil servant should not be required to do anythi unlawful. In the very unlikely event of a civil servant being aske to do something which he or she believes would put him or h in clear breach of the law, the matter should be reported to superior officer or to the Principal Establishment Officer, wh should if necessary seek the advice of the Legal Adviser to th department. If legal advice confirms that the action would b likely to be held to be unlawful, the matter shoul be reported i writing to the Permanent Head of the department.

9. Civil servants often find themselves in situations whe they are required or expected to give information to Parliamentary Select Committee, to the media, or to individual In doing so they should be guided by the general policy of th Government on evidence to Select Committees and on th disclosure of information, by any specifically departmenta policies in relation to departmental information, and by th requirements of security and confidentiality. In this respec however, as in other respects, the civil servant's first duty is t his or her Minister. Ultimately the responsibility lies wit Ministers, and not with civil servants, to decide what informatio should be made available, and how and when it should b released, whether it is to Parliament, to Select Committees, t the media or to individuals. It is not acceptable for a serving o former civil servant to seek to frustrate policies or decisions o Ministers by the disclosure outside the Government, in breach o confidence, of information to which he or she has had access a a civil servant.

10. It is Ministers and not civil servants who bear politica responsibility. Civil servants should not decline to take, o abstain from taking, an action merely because to do so woul conflict with their personal opinions on matters of politica choice or judgment between alternative or competing objective and benefits; they should consider the possibility of declinin only if taking or abstaining from the action in question is felt t be directly contrary to deeply held personal conviction on fundamental issue of conscience.

11. A civil servant who feels that to act or to abstain fro acting in a particular way, or to acquiesce in a particular decisio or course of action, would raise for him or her a fundamenta issue of conscience, or is so profoundly opposed to a policy a to feel unable consientiously to administer it in accordance wit the standards described in this note, should consult a superio officer, or in the last resort the Permanent Head of the department, who can and should if necessary consult the Head of the Home Civil Service. If that does not enable the matter t be resolved on a basis which the civil servant concerned is able to accept, he or she must either carry out his or her instructions or resign from the public service — though even after resignation he or she will still be bound to keep the confidences to which he or she has become privy as a civil servant.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Government Objectives

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement outlining the objectives of her Government for the rest of the current Parliament.

The Prime Minister: At home, we aim for continued reduction of inflation and sustained economic growth, based on sound financial policies. We will continue policies designed to achieve better prospects for employment, involving a more flexible and competitive economy encouraging initiative and enterprise. Our aim will be to hold public expenditure broadly stable in real terms, to seek to reduce Government borrowing and to reduce the level of taxation. We will work for the spread of wealth and ownership more widely in our country, based upon the privatisation of industries, the encouragement of individual home-ownership, and the spread of employee profit sharing and share participation in

business. We will use our new legislation to protect householders and business from excessive rate demands, and will continue with our task of streamlining local government. We will seek to free more publicly owned land, particularly in city centres, for the rebuilding of our urban areas, and will consider simplifying planning regulations to help investment.

We shall bring to a conclusion our widespread review of the welfare state — the largest review since Beveridge. We will seek to protect the poorest in our community, whilst strengthening incentives to work. We will encourage the new board of management of the NHS to put patients first, and to ensure that the increasing resources we are making available for the Health Service go to improve the quality of service.

We shall vigorously uphold the rule of law and fight crime, especially drug abuse and crimes of violence. We will complete our examination of public order legislation. We shall continue our work for a better educational system, by giving parents more say, by extending the training and vocational elements in teenage education, and by laying greater emphasis on the improvement of standards in the system.

Our policies on pollution will improve the environment, and our conservation policies will protect the best in our heritage.

Abroad, we will promote freer and fairer trade between nations. Within the European Community, we seek to strengthen the workings of the internal market in goods and services so that industry thrives and the consumer throughout the EC has access to the best products at the best price, regardless of their source of manufacture, and our suppliers have a fair chance. We will continue to work for enlargement of the Community to strengthen democracy in Western Europe.

We will maintain the effectiveness of our defences through co-operation with our NATO Allies, and we will ensure that Britain maintains an independent nuclear deterrent. We will work from strength for the mutual reduction and control of armaments. We will see that Britain's voice remains prominent in international counsels. We will sustain our efforts to combat hunger and disease. We will continue to improve the efficiency of public services, taking Government out of those areas which are best left to others. We seek a strong Britain, where individuals have more choice.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister how many cases of accidental fluoride poisoning *(a)* in the workplace, *(b)* as a result of excess inclusion of fluoride in the water supply and *(c)* in all other circumstances have occurred in the United Kingdom in the last 30 years; and if she has any information on incidents in other countries in any of these categories in the same period.

The Prime Minister: During the 30 years in which water fluoridation has taken place in this country, there have been no instances of accidental fluoride poisoning as a result of excess inclusion of fluoride in the water supply. We are aware of one such accident resulting in a fatality which occurred in Annapolis in the United States of America in 1979 as a result of the fluoried level in the water accidentally rising to 20 times the optimal level. Such an accident could not occur in this country. The equipment here is designed to halt the supply of fluoride if the concentration in the water supply begins to exceed the tolerance level. Even if there were a malfunction in the monitoring equipment, the amount of fluoride which could enter the supply at any one time is severely limited.

I regret that information relating to accidental fluoride poisoning at the workplace could not be obtained without disproportionate cost and that data on the incidence of such accidents in all other circumstances are not available.

General Belgrano

Q71. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 12 February, she will make a statement about the security considerations which required the actual date of the visual sighting of the General Belgrano by HMS Conqueror to remain undisclosed to the House until after the date of publication in the *London Gazette* of the official despatch of the Commander in Chief, Fleet on Operation Corporate.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the speeches by my right hon. Friends in the debate of 18 February 1985, at columns 737-830.

Ayot St. Lawrence

Q100. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the parish of Ayot St. Lawrence.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Barron asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 26 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I will be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Benefits (Single Payments)

Mr. William Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those items for which single payments are made and the sum allowed for each item in Northern Ireland and indicate where these items and sums differ from those in Great Britain made by the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Prime Minister: The categories of items for which single payments can be made are detailed in part 7

of the Northern Ireland S Manual. The only difference from Great Britain is that single payments are not available for costs incurred in travelling to visit relatives in hospital, (there is a separate scheme covering such expenses).

The amounts generally payable for bedclothes, clothing and footwear are set out in appendix 7 to the Northern Ireland S Manual; these are the same as in Great Britain. Fixed amounts are not prescribed for other items but the independent adjudication authorities are required to award sufficient to purchase goods of reasonable quality; records are not held centrally of such awards in Northern Ireland or in Great Britain.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Legal Aid

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his Department's implementation of section 22 of the Legal Aid Act.

Mr. Newton: The authority for legal aid assessment officers to pass information to other officers for purposes not specified in section 22(1) of the Legal Aid Act 1974 remains suspended.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons were successful regarding claims for attendance allowance in 1981, 1982, 1983 and to the latest available date in 1984, as compared with the number of claims made in the respective years.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Attendance Allowance—Initial Claims 1981-84

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Initial claims received in each year	167,000	193,000	233,000	258,000
Total decisions made in each year	149,000	182,000	217,000	240,000
Total decisions resulting in an award	108,000	136,000	159,000	182,000

Social Security Reviews

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the bodies listed as having given oral or written evidence to his social security reviews have advised the Government *(a)* to abolish the state earnings-related pension scheme, *(b)* to abolish heating additions or other additions to supplementary benefit, *(c)* to abolish single payments to supplementary benefit claimants, *(d)* to abolish the Christmas bonus, *(e)* to abolish the death grant, *(f)* to abolish the maternity grant, *(g)* to create a two-tier child benefit, *(h)* to tax child benefit, *(i)* to means-test child benefit, *(j)* to abolish child benefit for young people between 16 and 19 years and *(k)* to modify or reduce the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Whitney: Over 4,000 pieces of evidence covering a wide range of options have been received in the course of the social security review. As we have made clear, the Government do not propose to publish or summarise evidence. However, individuals and organisations are free to publish their evidence, if they wish, and a number h done so. It would be possible to identify and list published evidence in the manner requested only disproportionate cost.

Notifiable Diseases

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State Social Services if he will list the diseases which required to be notified to his Department; w information his Department seeks concerning the pers concerned in order to identify sectors of the populatio risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The following diseases notifiable in England and Wales:

Acute encephalitis
Acute meningitis
Acute poliomyelitis
Anthrax
Cholera
Diphtheria
Dysentery
Food poisoning
Infective jaundice
Lassa fever
Leprosy
Leptospirosis
Malaria
Marburgh disease
Measles
Ophthalmia neonatorum
Paratyphoid fever
Plague
Rabies
Relapsing fever
Scarlet fever
Smallpox
Tetanus
Tuberculosis
Typhoid fever
Typhus fever
Viral haemorrhagic fever
Whooping cough
Yellow fever

Medical officers for environmental health are requir to submit returns of notifications in their areas to the Offi of Population Censuses and Surveys, with the age and s of the patients concerned.

Oxygen Therapy

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State f Social Services if he will publish the latest financial co per annum in providing oxygen therapy by means of *(a)* oxygen concentrators and *(b)* oxygen cylinders; and if h will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The total cost to the famil practitioner services in England of the domiciliary oxyge service was £8·4 million in 1983-84. Only cylinders a supplied. Concentrators are available only through th hospital service at present and no information on the cos of domiciliary installations is collected centrally. We pla to introduce concentrators into the domiciliary service fo high volume users later this year, since this is a more co effective form of supply. Detailed calculations of th savings likely to be achieved will be available whe tenders have been evaluated. Meanwhile, the late available figures on the relative costs of cylinders an concentrators are those contained in the North Weste regional health authority's report on the pilot study o oxygen concentrators.

Motor and Neurologically Impaired Children

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *526*, if he will list the centres in the United Kingdom undertaking training programmes for motor and neurologically impaired children similar to those at the institute for motor disorders in Budapest.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that about 25 schools and units in the United Kingdom use some form of conductive education. We do not collect detailed information about centres where particular methods of treatment or education are practised.

Deaf People (Social Workers)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he attributes the reduction in the number of people taking post-qualifying courses for social work with deaf people between 1979 and 1983, given in his answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, columns *463-4*.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of people taking these courses have never been high; it has long been difficult to find social workers wishing to specialise in this way. The Department is in touch with the relevant professional bodies with a view to improving the situation.

Secure Accommodation

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce long-term secure accommodation for persons not sufferng from mental illness as defined by law but who none the less require a secure and sheltered environment for their own safety and that of others.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Contraceptives

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has discussed with the British Medical Association and the General Medical Council the implications of the judgment in the Gillick case for the implementation of his Department's guidelines on the prescription of contraceptive drugs or devices to minors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. We shall be reviewing our guidelines when the final outcome of the case is known.

Abortions

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many resident girls aged 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 years have died as a result of abortions in each year since 1968.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following numbers of deaths resulting form abortions — all forms including spontaneous abortions—among girls aged 16 and under resident in England and Wales were registered in the years indicated:

1968 one 15 year old
1970 two 13 year olds
1971 one 12 year old
1972 two 15 year olds
1978 one 15 year old
1979 one 16 year old
1981 one 16 year old

No such deaths were registered in the remaining years.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if any studies have been brought to his attention which indicate that fluoride is a cause of genetic damage;

(2) if any studies have been brought to his attention which indicate that fluoride is carcinogenic;

(3) if any studies have been brought to his attention which indicate that fluoride causes damage to plant and animal life.

Mr. John Patten: Our independent scientific advisers have considered the relevant work on the genetic effects of fluoride as used in water fluoridation schemes to achieve a concentration of one part per million in the drinking water of whole communities. They have also considered all the available evidence on the biological effects of fluoride in short term tests, animal carcinogenicity tests and the epidemiological evidence recently reviewed in the report of the working party on fluoridation of water and cancer, copies of which are available in the Vote Office. They have concluded that there is no evidence leading to an expectation of a mutagenic hazard to man through the induction of heritable abnormalities in the germ cells and that there is no reliable evidence of any hazard to man in respect of cancer from the fluoridation of drinking water to a concentration of one part per million.

The effect of toxic concentrations of fluoride on plants and animals are well documented. However, it has been established that irrigation with water containing fluoride at one part per million does not cause adverse effects on plants, and that the use of fluoridated water at the same concentration in the diet of animals has no harmful consequences.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Serviees what is the precise nature, extent and duration of the consultation that he expects health authorities to conduct, and with whom, prior to any request to a statutory water undertaker to add fluoride to water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have accepted that the Water (Fluoridation) Bill should be amended in order to place a statutory duty on the health authorities to undertake proper public consultation before deciding whether to apply to the statutory water undertaker for fluoridation. We are considering the precise terms of the amendment in the light of the views expressed during discussion of the Bill.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those local authorities which have passed a resolution on the addition of fluoride to the water supplies, indicating against each one whether a decision was in favour or against.

Mr. John Patten: The following health authorities in England are understood to have requested water fluoridation. In the main, these requests were made by area health authorities. New requests for fluoridation after enactment of the Water (Fluoridation) Bill will fall to be

considered by district health authorities. Only the then Wirral AHA is known to have resolved not to request fluoridation.

Regional Health Authority AHA/DHA's which requested Water Authorities to introduce fluoridation

Northern
Durham AHA
South Tyneside AHA
Sunderland AHA
Northumberland AHA
Cleveland AHA*
Cumbria AHA*
North Tyneside DHA*
Northumberland DHA*

Yorkshire
Bradford AHA
Calderdale AHA
Kirklees AHA
Leeds AHA
Wakefield AHA

Scunthorpe DHA
Humberside AHA*
Grimsby DHA*
Scunthorpe DHA*

Trent
Derbyshire AHA
Leicestershire AHA
Nottingham AHA
Rotherham AHA

South Derbyshire DHA
Bassetlaw DHA
Central Nottinghamshire DHA
Nottingham DHA
Doncaster DHA

East Anglian
Cambridge AHA
Norfolk AHA

Wessex
No requests

North West Thames
Bedfordshire AHA
Brent and Harrow AHA
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster AHA
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow AHA
Paddington DHA*

North East Thames
Essex AHA
Camden and Islington AHA
Redbridge and Waltham Forest AHA
(North East Thames RHA subsequently on behalf of Thames Region as a whole.)

South East Thames
Greenwich and Bexley AHA
Bromley DHA

Oxford
Berkshire AHA
Buckinghamshire AHA
Northamptonshire AHA
Oxfordshire AHA

South Western
Avon AHA
Cornwall AHA
Gloucester AHA
Somerset AHA
Devon AHA

South West Thames
Surrey AHA*
West Sussex AHA*
Croydon AHA*
Kingston AHA*
Merton and Sutton AHA*

West Midlands
Birmingham AHA
Walsall AHA
Hereford AHA
Staffordshire AHA
Warwickshire AHA
Dudley AHA
Sandwell AHA
Wolverhampton AHA
Salop AHA
Coventry AHA
Solihull AHA

Mersey
Cheshire AHA*
Liverpool AHA*
St. Helens AHA*
Sefton AHA*

North Western
Lancashire AHA
Bolton AHA
Bury AHA
Manchester AHA
Oldham AHA
Rochdale AHA
Salford AHA
Stockport AHA
Tameside AHA
Trafford AHA
Wigan AHA

* Health authorities which are known to have had discuss with Water Authorities but have made no formal request.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for So Services if he will list in the *Official Report* all those a in the United Kingdom which do not have fluoride ad to the water supplies but which have enjoyed a reduc in the incidence of dental caries of a similar or gre extent than areas which have had fluoride added to water supplies over a comparable period.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available would it in any case constitute a valid test of effectiveness of water fluoridation. Studies which h been carried out in this country contrasting compar fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas have consiste shown that the reduction in dental decay is between third to one half greater in the fluoridated than in comparable non-fluoridated area. For a survey of results of recent British studies, my hon. Friend may w to consult the journal "Community Dental Health (19 Volume 1", pages 47 to 54, a copy of which I have to him.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for So Services (1) what studies Her Majesty's Government h made, or are aware of, as to the extent of ingestion fluoride by the population as a result of eating food s as vegetables grown on land irrigated with fluor containing water or processed in water contain fluoride; what conclusions have been drawn; and if he make a statement;

(2) why it has not been considered appropriate for chemicals normally used to add fluoride ion to the pu water supply to be submitted to the Committee on Sa of Medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend h replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has to the LD50 level of fluoride ion in animals, specifying the animals involved.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.
I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

State Pension

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the costs of increasing the basic state pension by £1 per week for single pensioners and married couples in 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: The full-year cost of raising the basic retirement pension by £1 per week for each person receiving a pension on his or her own insurance—that is with no increase for adult dependants or married women receiving pensions on their husband's insurance—would be £380 million gross, or £280 million net of savings on supplementary benefit and housing benefit.

Hypothermia

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of persons who have died due to hypothermia during the last 12 months; and what were the age categories of those persons.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia by sex and age group, 1 December 1983 to 30 November 1984
England and Wales

Age group	*Males*	*Females*	*Persons*
0 to 4	2	2	4
5 to 14	1	—	1
15 to 24	5	1	6
25 to 34	2	2	4
35 to 44	7	3	10
45 to 54	17	10	27
55 to 64	27	21	48
65 to 74	49	54	103
75 to 84	75	143	218
85 and over	38	109	147
All ages	223	345	568

Figures are provisional.

Blood Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of blood products for use by haemophiliacs at transfusion centres is imported; and what proportion of imported products are used after one year, after two years, after three years, and after more than three years, respectively;

(2) when the heat treatment (protein fractionation) plant for blood products at Elstree will be completed and working.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: For information on the availability of heat-treated blood products, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on 5 February at column *527*. We do not collect information on how long imported products are kept.

AIDS

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which English regional health authorities have tested blood given by donors for HTLV3 antibodies;

(2) what proportion of HTLV3 tests give false positives *(a)* in experimental use and *(b)* in routine use.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are co-ordinating the evaluation of tests as they become available to assess which will be most suitable in the National Health Service. An important feature of this evaluation is to assess the reliability of tests in terms of false positives and false negatives. No regional transfusion centre is yet routinely testing blood for the AIDS related virus.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that regional health authorities are pursuing a common policy in regard to the prevention of blood donation by acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our policy objective is to ensure that would-be donors who are at high risk of contracting AIDS do not give blood. All regional health authorities have been told to issue our leaflet, "AIDS: Important New Advice for Blood Donors", to all existing and would-be donors on an individual basis. We know of no region which is not implementing this policy.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the exact nature of the consultations he is having with retail pharmacists over their current stockholding of drugs which will no longer be available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of young people between 16 and 18 years currently in receipt of supplementary benefit through unemployment and *(b)* the costs of the payment of the benefit to the young unemployed.

Mr. Whitney: The latest estimate of the number of young people aged 16 and 17 years receiving supplementary benefit because of unemployment was 160,000 in December 1983. The amount of supplementary benefit paid to young unemployed people in this age group in the financial year 1983-84 was approximately £185 million.

Severe Weather Payment

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the choice of a base line of 15·5 deg. C., in the formula used by the Chief Adjudication Officer for calculation of payment of supplementary benefit for fuel in periods of exceptionally severe weather assumes that this is an adequate temperature for a claimant's home.

Mr. Whitney: An outdoor temperature of 15·5 deg. C. is the baseline used by the Meteorological Office from

which to calculate an indicator of average temperatures over a period, expressed in "degree days." The trigger points which have been set to determine when claimants in particular parts of the country may be eligible for single payments in periods of exceptionally severe weather are not in any way determined by the baseline upon which degree days are calculated. Moreover, the Chief Adjudication Officer has been advised by the Meteorological Office that, using the baseline of 15·5 deg. C., the proportion by which the actual number of degree days calculated for a period exceeds the mean for that period of the year is a reasonable indicator of how much more fuel than the average for that period is required to heat a building. But that does not imply any judgment about the temperature to which anyone should actually heat their home.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it has been decided to allow the single fuel payment for severe weather to be paid for the week ended 24 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *70*]: I understand that on the basis of the criteria set out in paragraphs 7426-7459 and appendix 19 of the S Manual — a copy of which is in the Library — the Chief Adjudication Officer has decided to advise local adjudication officers that the "exceptionally severe weather" condition in Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulation 26 has not been satisfied in any part of Great Britain in the week ending 23 February 1985.

Ancillary Services (Competitive Tendering)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the performance of each area health authority in England and Wales in putting ancillary services out to competitive tendering, to the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1985, c. *525*]: The great majority of health authorities have now produced satisfactory competitive tendering programmes, and regions are taking steps to obtain satisfactory programmes for the remainder. We have received reports from health authorities showing the progress they had made by 31 December 1984 in the implementation of their programmes. The details shown in the tables give the percentage of the services put out to tender by then and the estimated annual savings on work costing over £100,000 a year awarded either to private contractors or the in-house organisation.

Districts	*Percentage of service put out to tender*			*Estimated Annual Savings*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	*£*
Northern RHA				
Hartlepool	nil	3	nil	—
North Tees	nil	nil	nil	—
South Tees	4	3	nil	—
East Cumbria	nil	nil	nil	—
South Cumbria	nil	nil	100	—
West Cumbria	nil	nil	nil	—
Darlington	nil	nil	nil	—
Durham	nil	nil	nil	—
North West Durham	nil	nil	nil	—
South West Durham	nil	nil	nil	—
Northumberland	11	nil	29	2,000
Yorkshire RHA				
Hull	nil	nil	nil	
East Yorkshire	nil	nil	nil	
Grimsby	nil	nil	nil	
Scunthorpe	61	nil	nil	
Northallerton	nil	nil	100	
York	nil	nil	nil	
Scarborough	nil	nil	nil	
Harrogate	nil	nil	nil	
Bradford	nil	2	nil	
Airedale	nil	nil	nil	
Calderdale	nil	nil	100	
Huddersfield	nil	1	nil	
Dewsbury	nil	nil	48	
Leeds Eastern	nil	nil	nil	
Leeds Western	nil	nil	nil	
Wakefield	nil	nil	100	
Pontefract	nil	nil	nil	
Trent RHA				
North Derbyshire	17	21	nil	
South Derbyshire	nil	nil	nil	
Leicestershire	nil	1	nil	
North Lincolnshire	nil	8	nil	
South Lincolnshire	nil	2	nil	
Bassetlaw	nil	nil	nil	
C Notts	nil	nil	nil	
Nottingham	5	8	9	
Barnsley	4	16	nil	
Doncaster	nil	13	nil	
Rotherham	nil	nil	nil	
Sheffield	nil	nil	32	
East Anglian RHA				
Cambridge	41	58	nil	
Peterborough	nil	38	nil	
Huntingdon	nil	96	nil	
Great Yarmouth/Waverley	nil	22	100	
West Norfolk/Wisbech	nil	nil	100	
Norwich	nil	36	nil	
West Suffolk	nil	7	nil	
East Suffolk	nil	15	100	
North West Thames RHA				
North Bedfordshire	nil	nil	nil	
South Bedfordshire	1	28	nil	
North Hertfordshire	nil	1	nil	
North West Hertfordshire	nil	nil	100	
South West Hertfordshire	nil	nil	nil	
East Hertfordshire	nil	nil	nil	
Barnet	nil	nil	nil	
Harrow	nil	nil	100	
Hillingdon	32	19	nil	
Ealing	nil	nil	100	
Hounslow/Spelthorne	nil	14	nil	
Hammersmith/Fulham	nil	nil	nil	
Paddington & North Kensington		13	100	
Victoria	nil	10	nil	
Brent	nil	nil	nil	
North East Thames RHA				
Barking	nil	nil	nil	
Basildon	nil	nil	nil	
Bloomsbury	nil	nil	48	
City & Hackney	nil	nil	nil	
Enfield	nil	nil	nil	
Hampstead	nil	nil	nil	
Haringey	nil	nil	nil	
Islington	nil	nil	nil	
Mid Essex	nil	43·4	100	
Newham	nil	nil	nil	
Redbridge	nil	nil	nil	
Tower Hamlets	nil	nil	nil	
Waltham Forest	nil	2	nil	

Districts	Percentage of service put out to tender			Estimated Annual Savings £
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
West Essex	nil	2	100	46,000
Southend	nil	nil	100	165,000
North East Essex	11	10	nil	82,000
Northern RHA				
Gateshead	nil	4	nil	—
Newcastle	5	26	22	—
North Tyneside	nil	nil	nil	—
South Tyneside	nil	nil	nil	—
Sunderland	nil	nil	nil	—
South East Thames RHA				
Bexley	nil	nil	nil	—
Brighton	3	nil	nil	—
Bromley	35	98	nil	1,293,000
Camberwell	nil	nil	100	—
Canterbury/Thanet	nil	62	nil	—
Dartford/Gravesham	nil	nil	nil	—
Eastbourne	37	1	nil	—
Greenwich	nil	nil	nil	—
Hastings	nil	nil	nil	—
Lewisham/N. Southwark	nil	nil	nil	—
Maidstone	39	76	39	406,000
Medway	nil	84	nil	189,000
South East Kent	28	nil	nil	—
Tunbridge Wells	36	26	nil	—
West Lambeth	nil	nil	nil	—
South West Thames RHA				
North West Surrey	nil	nil	51	50,000
West Surrey/NE Hants	nil	5	100	—
East Surrey	nil	51	36	32,000
Mid Surrey	30	nil	30	55,000
South West Surrey	15	17	100	75,000
Mid Downs	nil	30	nil	140,000
Chichester	nil	59	nil	353,000
Worthing	nil	49	nil	—
Kingston/Esher	nil	nil	79	180,000
Croydon	nil	nil	62	176,000
Richmond/ Twickenham /Roehampton	15	19	93	192,000
Wandsworth	nil	26	nil	—
Merton/Sutton	14	42	26	778,000
Wessex RHA				
E Dorset	nil	4	100	—
N Dorset	2	nil	nil	—
Portsmouth	nil	nil	nil	—
Southampton	nil	8	16	—
Winchester	8	6	100	—
Basingstoke	nil	nil	nil	—
Salisbury	nil	nil	nil	—
Swindon	nil	nil	nil	—
Bath	nil	nil	nil	—
Isle of Wight	nil	nil	nil	—
Oxford RHA				
East Berkshire	nil	nil	nil	—
West Berkshire	nil	3	nil	—
Aylesbury Vale	nil	54	nil	360,000
Milton Keynes	nil	47	nil	—
Wycombe	nil	nil	nil	—
Kettering	nil	nil	nil	—
Northampton	nil	nil	nil	—
Oxford	nil	33	nil	398,000
South Western RHA				
Cheltenham	nil	nil	100	31,000
Gloucester	nil	nil	100	53,000
Frenchay	nil	5	nil	32,000
Bristol/Weston	nil	nil	nil	—
Southmead	4	5	100	51,000
Somerset	24	31	87	24,000
Exeter	nil	nil	nil	—
North Devon	nil	nil	100	—
Torbay	nil	nil	nil	—
Plymouth	nil	nil	100	60,000
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly	nil	12	46	66,000
West Midlands RHA				
Mid Staffordshire	7	nil	nil	—
South Warwickshire	nil	nil	nil	—
Kidderminster	nil	nil	nil	—
Shropshire	nil	nil	nil	—
North Staffordshire	nil	nil	nil	—
Coventry	nil	nil	nil	—
Bromsgrove & Redditch	nil	nil	nil	—
Herefordshire	nil	nil	nil	—
Rugby	nil	nil	100	—
North Warwickshire	nil	nil	100	70,000
Solihull	nil	nil	nil	—
Wolverhampton	nil	nil	nil	—
Walsall	nil	nil	nil	—
North Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
Dudley	nil	nil	nil	—
Sandwell	nil	nil	nil	—
East Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
Central Birmingham	2	2	nil	—
South Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
South East Staffordshire	nil	nil	nil	—
Worcester	nil	nil	nil	—
West Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
Mersey RHA				
Southport/Formby	nil	nil	nil	—
South Sefton	nil	nil	nil	—
St. Helens/Knowsley	nil	nil	nil	—
Wirral	nil	nil	nil	—
Liverpool	nil	nil	nil	—
Macclesfield	nil	nil	nil	—
Malton	18	19	nil	11,000
Warrington	nil	38	nil	—
Chester	nil	12	nil	—
Crewe	nil	23	nil	—
North Western RHA				
North Manchester	nil	nil	nil	—
Central Manchester	nil	nil	nil	—
Wigan	nil	nil	nil	—
Stockport	nil	nil	nil	—
Tameside/Glossop	nil	nil	nil	—
Bolton	nil	nil	nil	—
Bury	12	7	nil	—
Chorley/South Ribble	nil	nil	nil	—
Preston	nil	nil	nil	—
Lancaster	nil	nil	nil	—
Blackpool	nil	nil	nil	—
Burnley	nil	nil	nil	—
South Manchester	nil	nil	nil	—
Trafford	nil	nil	nil	—
Oldham	nil	nil	nil	—
Salford	nil	nil	nil	—
West Lancashire	nil	nil	nil	—
Blackburn	nil	nil	nil	—
Rochdale	2	nil	nil	—

NATIONAL FINANCE

£1 Coin

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Chancellor of th Exchequer whether he will now consider changing th appearance and size of the £1 coin to make it mor acceptable to the elderly.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no plans to alter the dimensions of the £1 coin, which were the subject of extensive research prior to the introduction of the coin, and of consultations with organisations representing amongst others the elderly.

So far as design is concerned, a Scottish version of the coin, bearing a different type on the reverse, was issued in 1984, and a Welsh version will be issued this April. Northern Irish and English versions will also be issued in subsequent years.

Inland Revenue (Final Demand and Notice Payslips)

Mr. Higgins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Inland Revenue final demand and notice payslips, stating that steps will be taken to recover with costs, either by district or court proceedings, the sums stated if they are not paid within seven days, are sent by second class mail; if he will estimate the average delay before such documents are received by the taxpayer; why the envelopes are not date-stamped when posted by the Inland Revenue; whether any are posted after the date they are said to be issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: In common with most other Inland Revenue communications, all demand notes are issued by second-class mail. This is done in the interests of economy.

The final notice is the third notification and by the issue date the liability will have been overdue by some five weeks. But allowance is made for the time taken to deliver the notice before any follow-up action is taken.

Demand notices are computer-produced in Inland Revenue accounts offices in the evening as part of each day's record updating process and show that date as the date of issue. They are normally posted on the next working day. Envelopes containing demand notices are generally of the type known as printed postage impression, and it is normal Post Office policy not to date stamp such envelopes.

National Economic Development Council

Mr. Proctor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons are employed by the National Economic Development Council at the latest available date and in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of staff employed by the National Economic Development Council at 31 December 1984 was 209—full-time equivalents. The number at 31 March in each of the past five years was as follows:

Year	*Staff-in-post*
1980	233
1981	223
1982	217½
1983	209
1984	210½

The decrease between 31 March 1980 and 31 December 1984 is 10·3 per cent. Since the peak in NEDO staff numbers in July 1979, the number of staff has fallen by 15·4 per cent.

HMSO Bookshops

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the E whether items of urgency which need to be disp the various HMSO bookshops in the United Kin sent to each bookshop by Datapost.

Mr. Hayhoe: Such items are usually dispa Datapost, though other rapid delivery facilities used.

Commercial Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exch if the money passed back to the private sector by of England through the purchase of commer appears in any calculation or measure of grow money supply; what are the figures for that m every quarter since the beginning of 1979; and h that measure or the amount spent on p commercial bills compares with the am overfunding for each quarter over the same peri

(2) what rate of interest is currently charge Bank of England when it agrees to purchase co bills; and what information he has as to how this c with the rates of interest currently payable deposits;

(3) what is the estimated total of commercial currently held by the Bank of England and *(b)* private hands;

(4) if there is any policy limit on the ability of of England to purchase commercial bills;

(5) what has been the extent of overfunding quarter since the beginning of 1979; what has extent of the Bank of England's purchase of co bills for each quarter over the same period; and w these two factors have had on interest rates and policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Mem replies as soon as possible.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exch how many occasions the Commission has taken of suspected quota evasion with multi-fibre arra supplier countries in 1983 and 1984; and, of the many have involved the suspected evasion of m arrangement quotas for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not have this informatio actions of the European Commission.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exch how many occasions his Department has dete fraudulent importation of textile and clothing covered by multi-fibre arrangement quotas in th Kingdom in 1983 and 1984; and what penalti subsequently imposed on the exporting co concerned and on the exporting countries concer

Mr. Hayhoe: The information asked for in the of the question could be obtained only at a di tionate cost. The matters dealt with in the second for the Commission.

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor Exchequer if he will publish figures showing

obtained from each rate of income tax in each year since 1978-79 at current and constant 1978-79 prices; and if he will also show the percentage increase in revenue from the lowest rate of income tax showing 1978-79 as 100.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985, c. *494*]: I regret that it is not possible to provide the information precisely in the form requested, since income tax receipts cannot be distinguished by rate of tax. The first table shows total income tax receipts at current and constant 1978-79 prices. The second table shows the estimated percentage breakdown on the basis of tax liabilities in respect of income in each year, distinguishing tax at the basic rate and for 1978-79 and 1979-80 at the lower rate.

£ million

Income tax receipts	*At current prices*	*At 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	18,748	18,748
1979-80	20,599	17,620
1980-81	24,295	17,520
1981-82	28,725	18,840
1982-83	30,474	18,740
1983-84	31,280	18,420

* Using the GDP deflator.

Percentages of income tax liabilities

			Tax at higher rates		
	Tax at lower rate	*Tax at basic rate*	*Basic rate slice*	*In excess of basic rate*	*Investment income surcharge*
1978-79	21·7	67·9	5·2	4·0	1·2
1979-80	19·5	70·7	5·4	3·4	1·0
1980-81	—	89·8	5·7	3·6	0·9
1981-82	—	87·7	6·9	4·4	1·0
1982-83	—	88·0	6·7	4·4	0·9
1983-84	—	88·3	6·5	4·2	1·0

* Excluding investment income surcharge.

Fringe Benefits

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees are known to the Inland Revenue to be benefiting from their employer providing (i) a company car, (ii) an occupational health scheme, (iii) subsidised meals at work, (iv) financial help with school fees, telephone bills, wages of chauffeurs, gardeners and other domestic staff and (v) nursery facilities for their children; and what revenue is obtained by the Exchequer from taxing each of these benefits either wholly or partly.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *571*]: I regret that the information requested is not available for all the benefits listed and that it is not possible to provide separate figures for male and female employees. The available information—which includes directors—is as follows:

It is estimated that there are about 1½ million company cars available for private use by directors and employees. Of these about 1·1 million attract a charge to tax under the special rules for taxing benefits-in-kind in the hands of directors and those employees currently earning at a rate of £8,500 a year or more. The tax yield for 1984-85—including the yield from taxing free fuel for private motoring—is estimated to be abut £330 million.

Approximately 625,000 people have premiums for medical insurance paid for by their employers. Of these, about 425,000 are directors and employees within the scope of the special rules for taxing benefits-in-kind. The tax yield for 1984-85 is estimated at about £20 million.

The benefit of employer subsidised canteen is exempt from charge by section 62(7) of the Finance Act 1971, provided that the benefit is available to employees generally.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the vehicle excise duty on *(a)* private motor cars and *(b)* commercial vehicles in each of the last 10 years; and what has been the total revenue from each source in each of those years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *56*]: The information requestion is shown in the table:

Private motor cars

Financial year	*Rate of duty United Kingdom £*	*Revenue* United Kingdom £ million*
1974-75	25	350
1975-76	40	468
1976-77	40	577
1977-78	50	731
1978-79	50	760
1979-80	50	812
1980-81	60	956
1981-82	70	1,154
1982-83	80	†1,348
1983-84	85	‡1,578
1984-85	90	—

* Estimate.
† Includes revenue from light vans from October 1982.
‡Includes revenue from light vans.

Commercial goods vehicles

Financial year	*Rate of duty* Great Britain £*	*Northern Ireland £*	*Revenue† United Kingdom £ million*
1974-75	24-567	24-504	160
1975-76	40-756	40-672	182
1976-77	40-756	40-672	218
1977-78	50-1,064	50-976	291
1978-79	50-1,064	50-976	304
1979-80	50-1,064	50-976	325
1980-81	60-1,383	60-1,265	373
1981-82	70-1,590	70-1,454	429
1982-83‡	80-1,993	80-1,818	‖455
	United Kingdom		
1982-83¶	170-1,820		
1983-84	150-2,940		•383
1984-85	130-3,100		—

* Rates of duty for goods vehicles are complex in structure and very numerous. Only the minimum and maximum rates are given. The minimum rate is the lowest goods vehicle rate in each case, except after 1 October 1982 when the lowest non-light van rate is shown. The maxima quoted are for vehicles of 12 tons unladen weight until 30 September 1982; for vehicles of 32.52 tonnes gross weight for 1 October 1982 to 31 March 1983 and 38 tonnes gross weight after that date.
† Estimate.
‡ To 30 September.
‖ Excludes revenue from light vans from 31 October 1982.
¶ To 31 March.
• Excludes revenue from light vans.

Fuel Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the value added tax on a gallon of *(a)* petrol and *(b)* diesel in each of the last 10 years; and what has been the total revenue from each source in each of those years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: The information is as follows:

	Amount of VAT per gallon (pence)		Total VAT revenue from road fuel
	Petrol	Derv	£ million
1974-75	15	11	140
1975-76	15	12	430
1976-77	9	9	325
1977-78	8	9	290
1978-79	9	9	280
1979-80	16	16	420
1980-81	17	18	575
1981-82	21	21	720
1982-83	22	22	800
1983-84	24	22	875

The amount of VAT on a gallon of petrol and derv has been calculated at the rate and (typical) prices current in January each year. The total VAT revenue has been calculated from estimates of consumers' expenditure on road fuel, and takes account of relevant VAT rate changes. Expenditure on derv is included but is not available as a separate estimate.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the representations received against any further extension of value added tax on *(a)* books, *(b)* newspapers and periodicals and *(c)* newspaper advertising.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: Treasury Ministers have received over 2,000 representations against the imposition of VAT on books, newspapers, periodicals and newspaper advertising. It is not practicable to list all these.

Lump Sum Pensions (Taxation)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the representations received against taxing lump sum pensions.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: We have received a considerable number of representations from interested parties in the past six months. Indentifying and listing each individual representation would involve disproportionate time and cost.

North Sea Oil (Revenue)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the revenue from North sea oil operations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *58*]: Total North sea oil tax take—that is, royalties, petroleum revenue tax (including advance payments), supplementary petroleum duty and ring-fence corporation tax (before ACT set-off)—in each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1983-84 was as follows:

	£ billion
1979-80	2·3
1980-81	3·9
1981-82	6·5
1982-83	7·8
1983-84	8·8

DEFENCE

Belize

8. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom forces in Belize.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on United Kingdom defence commitments in Belize.

Mr. Stanley: British forces of around 1,600 are based in Belize to assist in the external defence of that country and with the training of the Belize Defence Force.

RAF Basic Trainer

15. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department expects to reach a decision on the new basic trainer for the Royal Air Force.

25. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his decision in respect of the Jet Provost replacement trainer aircraft.

30. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he is going to announce a decision on the new basic training aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

57. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce which aircraft is to replace the present Royal Air Force trainer.

59. **Mr. Lamble** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to announce his decision on the replacement for the Royal Air Force trainer.

Mr. Lee: I hope that a final decision between the options, which still include the possibility of refurbishing the Jet Provost, will be made shortly.

33. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has made any changes in the specifications for the Royal Air Force basic trainer.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs).

37. **Mr. Maginnis** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received best and final offers for the construction of the Royal Air Force basic trainer.

Mr. Lee: Yes. Best and final offers have been received from AAC-Westland Ltd, British Aerospace PLC, Hunting Firecracker Aircraft Ltd, and Short Brothers.

53. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to meet representatives of the companies which seek to manufacture the Royal Air Force basic trainer.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has already met representatives from each of the four companies concerned.

Schools (Service Visits)

21. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he is making for teams of service personal to visit schools to describe the current role of the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have presentation teams which include schools in their programme of presentations. In addition, many schools are visited each year by service careers information staff; these visits normally include presentations on career opportunities in the services.

Royal Dockyards

22. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on discussions between his Department and relevant trade unions on the future of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend discussed this question with trade union representatives at Rosyth on 13 February. He previously held similar discussions at Devonport. Both he and I, on separate occasions, have held other meetings with the trades unions on this subject. Additionally, there will be full consultation with the unions and others before decisions are taken about the future of the dockyards.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many commercial companies were approached by Mr. Peter Levene with a view to considering a private franchise arrangement to run Her Majesty's naval dockyards.

Mr. Lee: During the course of his studies into the future organisation and management of the royal dockyards Mr. Levene approached in excess of 20 companies. These included not only firms in the defence industry sector, but other companies with the necessary managerial and financial backing to sustain an operation the size of the dockyards.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any foreign-owned companies have been in contact with his Department about a possible private takeover of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Lee: No such approaches have been made to the Department.

Defence Documents (Classification)

23. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now review the security classification of defence documents as a result of the evidence in the Ponting case.

Mr. Heseltine: No. There are already well established procedures for the security classification of defence documents.

Nuclear Depth Charges

24. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the deployment of nuclear depth charges on board Royal Navy vessels is under review.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Nuclear Weapons

26. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of nuclear artillery in British Army tactical planning.

51. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of the role of nuclear artillery in British Army tactical planning.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

32. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the condition of the United Kingdom's current stockpile of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: The nuclear warheads for the battlefield nuclear capable weapons systems operated by the British Army in the Federal Republic of Germany are owned by the United States, which is responsible for their custody and maintenance.

43. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department will be reviewing current strategy on battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: The role of battlefield nuclear weapons within NATO's strategy of deterrence and flexible response is kept under continuous review by NATO Ministers in the nuclear planning group.

46. **Mr. Gould** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the condition of the Royal Navy's stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: A continuing programme for the withdrawal and dismantling of rounds from service for examination has confirmed the safety and serviceability of the Royal Navy's stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons.

48. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the modernisation of Britain's tactical nuclear weapons.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) and Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes).

54. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the acquisition by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces of new nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Wigan (Mr. Stott), for Preston (Mr. Thorne) and for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay).

Trident

27. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any further estimate of the likely increase in cost of the purchase of Trident as a result of the recent decline in value of the pound sterling.

Mr. Lee: As stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 29 January, at columns 134-137, the current Trident estimate is £9,285 million at 1984-85 prices and at £1=$1·38. $1·38 is the rate used by the Department for this year's recosting of the defence programme.

In view of the public interest in exchange rates, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has made available to the Select Committee on Defence and the Public Accounts Committee an indication of the effects of changes in the exchange rates on programme costs, so that those wishing to predict the effect of possible exchange rate changes over the procurement period are able to do so. The following table shows the broad exchange rate effect of a 1 per cent. change around the following alternative exchange rates:

$=£1	£ million
1·0	57
1·1	47
1·2	39
1·3	34
1·4	29
1·5	25
1·6	22
1·7	20

The above figures are based on the assumption that the chosen rate of exchange will remain constant throughout the life of the project.

34. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a revised estimate of the cost of the proportion of the Trident project being constructed in the United States of America.

Mr. Lee: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 29 January, at columns 134-37.

The United States share of the programme is estimated to cost about $5·7 billion and represents, at the exchange rate of £1=$1·38 used for recosting this year's defence programme, some 45 per cent. of the total estimated cost.

35. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings he has recently convened to discuss the Trident programme.

Mr. Lee: None. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is regularly kept in touch with progress on the programme.

41. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to place a ceiling on the cost of Trident.

Mr. Lee: Expenditure on the Trident project is subject to the normal constraints placed on the defence budget as a whole. The Government remain committed to Trident to replace Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent in the mid-1990s.

49. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present up-to-date cost to the United Kingdom of the Trident nuclear weapon.

Mr. Lee: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 29 January, at columns *134-37*. The estimated cost of Trident is £9,285 million at average 1984-85 prices and at an exchange rate of £1=$1·38.

61. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what way he anticipates the effectiveness of Trident will be curtailed by the development of Soviet ballistic missile defences in space.

Mr. Stanley: No developments in Soviet anti-ballistic missile defences are currently foreseen which are likely to negate the deterrent effect of the Trident force within the lifetime of the system.

Departmental Staff

28. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has changed the conditions of service for senior staff in the light of the judgment in the Pontin case.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Competition Policy

29. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received representations from industry regarding his competition policy; and if he is satisfied with the workings of that policy.

Mr. Lee: My ministerial colleagues and I have a close dialogue with industry about the effects of our procurement policies, including those relating to competition. I am satisfied that our competition policy is achieving increasing value for money in defence equipment procurement and improving the competitiveness of our defence industries.

FH70 Ammunition

31. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the order for FH70 ammunition due from Germany at the beginning of December 1984 has been delivered in whole or in part.

Mr. Lee: Deliveries of high explosive shells have not yet started, for the reasons I explained to the hon. Member in answer to his similar question on 29 January, at column 139. Deliveries of cartridges by German industry have been on schedule: late delivery of packaging by a United Kingdom contractor has delayed their dispatch to BAOR.

High-technology Research

36. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the speed of decision making in his Department and the amount of financial support available from his Department's budget for advanced high technology military research projects.

Mr. Lee: Yes, to both questions.

RAF Molesworth

38. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions he has issued to persons employed in the protection of the Molesworth base to permit a motor car occupied by persons attending a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament rally at the base to cross the official closed area.

Mr. Heseltine: The Ministry of Defence police at RAF Molesworth are under instructions to prevent trespass on Ministry of Defence land. Rights of public access also

the adjacent bridlepaths on Ministry land have been preserved but do not extend to vehicular access by private persons.

Airborne Early Warning System

39. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the progress of the airborne early warning system replacement programme.

56. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the slippage in the Nimrod programme.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Members to last week's Royal Air Force debate, when I said that this was not a procurement exercise of which either the Ministry or industry can be particularly proud. However, the first production aircraft is currently engaged in trials at RAF Waddington.

Strategic Defence Initiative

40. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what approaches he has had from the United States Government about British participation in the strategic defence initiative; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom, or any other European member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, will be involved in research for the American strategic defence initiative.

50. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to participate in the American strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Lee: We are continuing our close consultation with the United States Government. Any proposal for British Government involvement in the programme would obviously be a matter for future discussions, but we hope that British scientists might be involved. Under normal trading arrangements some British companies are already involved in preliminary studies relevant to the programme. Any proposed involvement by other NATO Governments would be a subject for discussion between the United States Government and the Government concerned.

European Fighter Aircraft

44. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had recently with British Aerospace plc in connection with the proposed European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement met senior representatives of British Aerospace earlier this month and discussed a variety of issues affecting the prospective European fighter aircraft programme. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Defence, and the Minister of State for Defence Procurement expect to have further discussions with the company in the near future. Senior officials of my Department are in frequent contact with the company.

Eastern Bloc (Trade)

45. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of goods bought by, or on behalf of, his Department from Eastern bloc countries during 1984.

Mr. Lee: MOD has placed no direct contracts with Eastern bloc countries in 1983-84, the last year for which statistics are available. However, as I indicated in my earlier replies to the hon. Member on 11 and 14 February, at columns 51 and 288 respectively, MOD contractors have made limited purchases of items and materials from Eastern bloc countries in circumstances where no problems of strategic dependence are involved.

Merchant Navy

47. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he last reviewed the defence role of the Merchant Navy.

Mr. Stanley: The contingent requirement for merchant vessels for defence purposes is kept under constant review.

Greenham Common

52. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about security arrangements at Royal Air Force, Greenham Common.

Mr. Stanley: Security at RAF Greenham Common remains under close review.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to pay an official visit to Greenham Common.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to visit RAF Greenham Common.

RAF Cottesmore

58. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the criteria for compensation against nuisance from noise for residents near to RAF Cottesmore.

Mr. Lee: The policy of my Department in respect of noise from military airfields is that noise insulation grants will be available if three conditions are satisfied:

(a) that new public works as defined in section 9(6) of the Land Compensation Act 1973 have been carried out;

(b) that, as a result of bringing these works into use, noise levels have increased.

(c) that noise levels are above a qualifying limit of an average 75dB(A) over a 12-hour period.

In addition, compensation may be paid to those in the vicinity of the airfield for injurious affection (depreciation in the value of dwellings) due directly to the effect of noise resulting from the bringing into use of the new public works.

In the case of RAF Cottesmore this policy has been applied, and a scheme was announced recently, as explained in a letter of 29 January 1985 to my hon. Friend from my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces.

W-82 Shell

60. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department will agree to American proposals to introduce the W-82 shell at the nuclear planning group meeting in March.

Mr. Heseltine: No proposals have been made for the introduction of new nuclear artillery shells into Europe.

South Pacific (Atomic Explosions)

62. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the documents which his Department has made available to the Australian Royal Commission investigating the effects of the atomic explosions in the South Pacific during the 1960s.

Mr. Lee: I remind the hon. and learned Member of the reply given in the House by the Prime Minister on 15 January, when she indicated that several hundred documents had then been released to the Australian Royal Commission. The process is continuing and all unclassified documents provided to the Royal Commission will be made available in the Public Records Office at the earliest opportunity.

63. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions have taken place between his Department and the Australian Government concerning the atomic explosions in the South Pacific during the 1950s.

Mr. Lee: Discussions between officials of my Department and officials of the Australian Department of Resources and Energy, which has responsibilities arising from the test programmes in Australia in the period from 1952-1963, take place on a regular basis. During his recent visit to London on 12 February, Senator Evans, the Minister for Resources and Energy, discussed matters arising from the test programmes with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement.

64. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many declassified documents have been made available to the Australian Royal Commission investigating the effects of the atomic explosions in the South Pacific during the 1950s; and how many other documents relating to this period remain classified.

Mr. Lee: As indicated by the Prime Minister to the House on 15 January, at that time several hundred documents relating to the test programmes and relevant to its terms of reference had been reviewed and released to the Australian Royal Commission. While many other documents relating to the test programmes remain classified, the Royal Commission is able to have limited access to this material. The process is continuing and many more documents from the records held in various Departments, the bulk of which are unclassified, have already been released.

65. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Defence why 15,000 of the 20,000 participants at the atomic tests held in the South Pacific in the 1950s who were not judged to be affected by high levels of radiation have been included in the survey being conducted by the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Lee: The National Radiological Protection Board study, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, in recognition of the public concern over t safety of all participants, is intended to include all tho who may have been exposed to the effects of ionisi radiation arising from the tests. To this end the names participants are being supplied to the NRPB along with t records of doses experienced. It is for NRPB to decide t criteria for inclusion in the analysis, how best to deal wi those with recorded exposure, and how the data is to analysed.

Royal Tournament (RN Displays)

66. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary State for Defence if he will give an assurance that in t consideration of economies on Royal Navy displays in t Royal Tournament and elsewhere the Admiralty Board giving due weight to their value to recruiting and to t public relations of the Royal Navy service.

Mr. Lee: Yes. I can assure my hon. Friend that t recruiting and PR value of RN displays is taken fully in account when economies are being considered.

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defen if he is satisfied that his Department has complied wi article 63(b) of the 1975 world plan of action for t United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Lee: Yes. Although no specific instructions ha been issued on this matter in the armed forces, since no are needed, my right hon. Friend has appointed departmental opportunities officer, who is responsible f ensuring equal opportunity for women, in accordance wi the programme of action on women in the Civil Servi announced by the Government on 9 February 1984.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defen what steps he is taking to promote, as far as it affe matters within his responsibilities, policies designed achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade f Women; and what budget he has allocated to this.

Mr. Lee: In keeping with the principal objectives the UN Decade for Women, the contribution made women in the services to the overall effectiveness of t armed forces has, over recent years, been steadi increasing; we expect this trend to continue. Howev there are no plans to alter the one major constraint, th women are not used in combatant roles.

Promoting equal opportunities for women civil serva in the Department and eliminating unfair discriminati are an integral part of the personnel policy of the MO A number of initiatives have been taken within t Department to implement this policy, but it is not possib to identify the costs involved separately.

Royal Irish Rangers (Ballymore)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Defen when he intends to announce his decision regarding t future training provision for Royal Irish Rangers at S Patrick's Barracks, Ballymore; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Lee: We are still considering the future traini provision for the Royal Irish Rangers in relation to S Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena and hope to make announcement shortly.

Departmental and Service Appointments

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy to give preferential consideration when making new appointments in his Department and the services to existing service personnel and civilian employees who are coming to the end of their contract of service but who wish to continue in employment.

Mr. Lee: Most established civil servants are appointed to the age of 60, and in some circumstances may serve to age 65. In filling new civilian appointments in my Department it is the normal practice first to consider staff already serving who have the necessary experience, but where such experience is also available outside the Department and there would be advantage to the Department in widening the search for a suitable appointee, external applications may be invited. In such cases, external applicants and internal candidates compete on equal terms for selection.

Appointments to service posts are made from within the armed forces, from among those best suited to fill the post, as part of the normal career progression. Where it is in the service interest, a service man may have his service extended to fill an appointment. For those leaving the armed forces there is a range of civilian posts in my Department which are particularly suitable for occupation by people with service experience, and recruitment to these is specially tailored for them.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding offering employment to those existing service personnel or civilian employees who come to the end of their contract of service but who wish to continue in employment.

Mr. Lee: Procedures exist whereby members of the armed forces are able to extend their service beyond their initial period of commitment. Cases are examined against the individual's continued fitness and efficiency and the needs of the service at that time. The latter would include age, rank and career structure considerations. Where these considerations permit, it is cost-effective to retain trained personnel, but new recruitment must also continue to meet future service needs.

The contractual retiring age for the Civil Service is 60 (or 65 for a small number of staff with reserved rights). The retention of civilian staff beyond age 60 is at departmental discretion. Non-mobile staff in my Department may continue in employment to age 65 subject to health, efficiency and the existence of a suitable post. Senior staff are generally required to retire at age 60. Some junior mobile staff may continue in service beyond 60 in their existing grade or be offered re-employment in a lower grade, subject to certain conditions. Mobile staff with short reckonable service for superannuation purposes may continue in service beyond age 60, subject to health, efficiency and the existence of a suitable post, to complete a specified number of years reckonable service or until age 65, whichever is earlier. Employment beyond age 65 is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Military Research and Development

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence by how much United Kingdom spending on military research and development has increased in real terms in the past 10 years; what are the reasons for the increase; and what information he has on the level of spending in the other European member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Lee: Defence spending on research and development over the last 10 years, adjusted to 1984-85 prices, has been as follows:

	£ million
1975-76	1,829
1976-77	1,787
1977-78	1,853
1978-79	1,937
1979-80	2,036
1980-81	2,151
1981-82	2,017
1982-83	1,886
1983-84	2,001
1984-85	2,106*

* Original estimates

The level of spending on defence research and development reflects the requirements of the defence equipment programme. Properly comparable statistics are not available for other European countries. Some information is given in the "Annual Review of Government Funded R&D" based on OECD data.

Rosyth Dockyard

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the new evidence that he has of safety risks involved in the storage of radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: There is no new evidence of safety risks involved in the storage of radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the decision was made to store radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard for a 10-year period;

(2) on what basis he is considering storing radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard for a 20-year period;

(3) when he will consult the trades unions concerned about his proposal for the storage of radioactive waste at Rosyth and Portsmouth dockyards for a period of 20 years.

Mr. Lee: In 1983 the MOD drew up plans for the storage at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards, for a 10-year period, of certain categories of radioactive waste arising from nuclear submarine refitting which had previously been disposed of at sea, pending the development of a permanent disposal route. At Portsmouth naval base small arisings of radioactive waste unconnected with nuclear refitting are stored pending disposal by approved routes. All these matters have been discussed with the trades unions.

Rosyth and Devonport were recently asked to draw up plans for 20 years storage to cater for any possible delay in the development of long-term disposal arrangements. When proposals on this have been formulated we will be discussing them with the unions.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the creation of a new burial ground for radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: None. The facilities will take the form of secure storage buildings. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the other answers I am giving him today on this subject.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the creation of a new dumping ground outside Rosyth dockyard for the radioactive waste that arises from nuclear work at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: None.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the radioactive waste arising from the decontamination of the Revenge and Resolution submarines is being stored outside Rosyth dockyard;

(2) if he plans to store the radioactive waste arising from the decontamination of the Repulse submarine within Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Lee: Radioactive waste arising from nuclear submarine decontamination is of a character which, depending on preparation methods, may be disposed of in a variety of ways. In the case of all three submarines in question, the waste has been or is to be removed from Rosyth for disposal by approved means.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the commercial companies known by his Department to have expressed interest in a private takeover of Rosyth or Plymouth dockyards on a franchise basis.

Mr. Lee: For reasons of commercial confidentiality I am not prepared to list the names of the companies concerned.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects NIREX to bring forward proposals for the burial of radioactive waste from nuclear submarines;

(2) what evidence he has considered from the United States of America about the storage of radioactive waste from its nuclear fleet;

(3) how much money his Department spent in 1984, and in the preceding five years, on research into the disposal of radioactive waste from nuclear submarines.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said on 24 January, at columns 1146-48, the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive is at present engaged on the identification of suitable arrangements for the burial of radioactive waste. In accordance with our policy of utilising national arrangements for the disposal of such material, we would expect to make use of whatever arrangements are eventually established. Our research work has, therefore, been confined to the handling and disposal of material created by the activity of nuclear submarine refitting, at a cost of some £0·5 million since 1979. National United Kingdom research has involved full consultation with overseas authorities, including, of course, those of the United States.

Polaris Fleet

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he now has for the siting of Britain's Polaris nuclear fleet when it is decommissioned and out of service.

Mr. Lee: Plans have not yet been drawn up. No Polaris vessels are expected to go out of service before the 1990s.

HMS Fearless and Intrepid

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for D
by what time he estimates that a decision must be
to replace HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid ;
replacements are to be available before Fearle
Intrepid come to the end of their anticipated servi

Mr. Lee: As I said in the answer I gave to m
Friend on 21 February, at column 529, we are cu
examining the provision of future amphibious cap
including the replacement of HMS Fearless and
Intrepid once they come to the end of their planne
in the mid-1990s. Our decision as to whether or
replace this capability must await the completion o
studies but, if agreed, would mean on present pla
detailed design work would need to start in abou
1986.

General Belgrano

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for D
what criteria he used in deciding which aspects
advice given to Ministers by officials relating
sinking of the General Belgrano, and the subs
revelations, should be made public.

Mr. Heseltine: In making my speech to the Ho
18 February, I was aware of a number of allegatio
had been made about ministerial handling of this
and I felt that the best way to deal with these was t
to the actual advice I had received at the time. W
quoted from a particular document, I have placed
in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for D
if he will place in the Library all unclassified ad
Ministers relating to the sinking of the General Be
and issues arising subsequently therefrom.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

F111 Jet (Crash)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for D
when he expects to receive the report on the crash
F111 jet near Tain bombing range in August 1984;
he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The aircraft accident investigation re
this accident has now been completed. It shows t
aircraft struck a bird, causing damage which
difficulties in the control of the aircraft. The pilot d
there was no option but to eject, which both cr
safely. The accident has been judged to be attribut
the bird strike.

Mr. Clive Ponting

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for D
what advice Ministers received from Sir Ewen Bro
about the prosecution of Clive Ponting.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to m
hon. Friend the Prime Minister's letter of 13 Febr
the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for D
(1) if he will place in the Library copies of Mr
Ponting's minutes of 4 April 1984 together w
proposed draft reply to the hon. Member for Linl

(Mr. Dalyell) and the replies received by Mr. Ponting to his minutes and draft reply from *(a)* Mr. Garnier, Director of Naval Operations and Trade, *(b)* Mr. Hoddinott, (for) Director of Naval Warfare and *(c)* Mr. Pender-Cudlip, Head of D18;

(2) what advice was obtained *(a)* by Mr. Ponting *(b)* by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and *(c)* by the Secretary of State for Defence concerning the classification of the information contained in the draft reply prepared by Mr. Ponting and circulated on 4 April 1984; and if he will place in the Library copies of any such advice;

(3) what advice was offered by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces concerning the classification of the information contained in the draft reply prepared by Mr. Ponting and circulated by him on 4 April 1984.

Mr. Heseltine: I explained to the House in the debate on 18 February, at column 738, that, in the deplorable circumstances in which the Government found themselves it had been decided to reveal advice given to Ministers by officials and where such advice was quoted I would make available the full text to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and place copies in the Library of the House. The documents requested do not fall into this category and I do not intend to place copies of them in the Library. I assume that the purpose of these questions is to establish that Mr. Ponting changed his view about what information could be given to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in reply to his letter to me of 19 March between his original submission of 29 March and 12 April. I myself explained this fully in the debate and do not dispute it. Mr. Ponting was the only person who advised me on the classification of his draft reply. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces minuted me to point out that Mr. Ponting's draft was inconsistent with the terms of the letter sent by the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 12 April, but he did not comment on the classification of the draft. The reasons for the terms of the reply I sent to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 18 April were also explained in my speech to the House at columns 745-46.

Correspondence (Meetings)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all meetings which took place in his Department between 4 April and 18 April 1984 which discussed possible replies to the letter of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 19 March; and if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes of any such meetings.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 February 1985

WALES

Population Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Welsh counties in order of percentage growth in electorate since 1979; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Growth in local government electorate by county since 1979

	Electorate		Change 1979-84	
	1979	1984	Number	Per cent.
Clwyd	288,608	304,304	15,696	5·4
Powys	81,823	86,089	4,266	5·2
Gwynedd	173,118	179,830	6,712	3·9
Dyfed	250,571	260,195	9,624	3·8
Gwent	324,047	333,435	9,388	2·9
Mid Glamorgan	399,332	408,219	8,887	2·2
West Glamorgan	279,393	284,783	5,390	1·9
South Glamorgan	286,908	291,657	4,749	1·7

Ministerial Duties

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many overnight stays Welsh Office Ministers spent in Wales during the month of January.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 25 February 1985, at column 39.

Mental Illness Services (Dyfed)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received the final report from the review group on mental illness services in Dyfed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I received the final report of the review group late in January, and I have discussed it with the chairman, Lady Crawshay, in company with the other members of the group. The report points to what has been achieved over the last two and a half years by the three statutory authorities and their staff, working in co-operation. It also emphasises that these improvements provide the basis for further challenging work, which will be necessary if the full potential of the changes made is to be realised. There is now a strategic plan for the development of services agreed by all three authorities, which is itself a measure of the commitment to sustaining the momentum for improvement that now exists. It is further evidence of the quality of services at St. David's that it has recently obtained conditional approval from the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for a reintroduction of nurse training on the basis of a demanding new syllabus.

I shall be in touch with the chairman of the three authorities to emphasise the importance I attach to the review group's conclusions and recommendations. I welcome and endorse them all. My Department will k abreast of progress in implementing the ser developments planned for the coming years. There wil opportunities for me to take stock in advance of the r planned study of mental illness services in Dyfed to conducted by the National Health Service Health Advis Service, in 1987.

A copy of the review group's final report has b placed in the Library.

Departmental Cash Limit

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wale he has anything to add to his answer of 13 Febru *Official Report*, columns *188-9*, concerning the cash li on class XVI, Vote 1 for the current year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Excluding the Spr Supplementary Estimate (£1,000) the cash limit for Cl XVI, Vote 1 is £741,489,000. I regret that, due to arithmetical error, this was wrongly quoted £733,489,000 in the answer which I gave to my h Friend on 13 February. Prior to the reduction £10,573,000 which I announced on that date, the relev cash limit was £752,062,000.

HOME DEPARTMENT

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Home Department (1) what action has been taken by Department with regard to the incidence of acqui immune deficiency syndrome in prisons;

(2) what medical advice has been given to prison st about acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Mellor: The Director of Prison Medical Servi has been keeping in close touch with the Department Health and Social Security on the question of AIDS a there have been regular and frequent exchanges information and advice. Advice was issued by the direc of prison medical officers in March 1984 and again earl this month. Information about AIDS has also been ma available to staff, and further guidance for staff a inmates has now been issued. Copies of this advice ha been placed in the Library of the House.

Representatives of the Directorate of Prison Medi Services are visiting establishments where there particular concern about AIDS. Every effort is being ma to allay the anxieties of staff, their trade uni representatives, and inmates about the disease.

Controlled Drugs (Security)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Home Department what steps he has taken in response the 34 recommendations contained in the 1983 report the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on t security of controlled drugs.

Mr. Mellor: Since publication of the report November 1983, a wide range of organisations have be consulted and invited to comment on its recommen tions. We have been analysing their responses and are n examining, in consultation with other Departments, t detailed implications of the report's recommendatio The Government's conclusions will be announced short

Overseas Students

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring up to date the information regarding Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi and Libyan nationals resident in the United Kingdom given by the Minister of State in reply to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 24 July 1984, *Official Report*, columns 585-86.

Mr. Waddington: According to provisional figures the total numbers of these nationals granted asylum and leave to remain on an exceptional basis in 1984 were as follows:

	Asylum	*Exceptional leave to remain*
Iran	295	502
Iraq	48	60
Libya	6	1
Syria	3	1

Provisional figures for the period 1 July 1984 to 31 December 1984 show that 33 Iranians, 11 Iraqis and one Libyan originally given leave to enter as students were granted asylum and a further 107 Iranians and 16 Iraqis were granted leave to remain on an exceptional basis. No Syrians originally admitted as students were granted asylum or exceptional leave to remain during this period.

Records for earlier years are now being computerised and I regret that this has shown that the figures previously given for the numbers granted asylum (with or without refugee status), including the figures I gave in reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 24 July 1984 were too high. According to provisional information from the computerised records the numbers granted asylum (with or without refugee status) in the period 1979-83 were as follows:

Country	*Number*
Iran	4,336
Iraq	231
Libya	73
Syria	16

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that his Department's inspectors carry out sufficient visits to premises where experiments on animals are carried out, especially those premises operated by the Royal College of Surgeons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. The latest statistics show that in 1983 members of the Home Office Cruelty to Animals Inspectorate made 5,816 visits (mainly unannounced) to departments within the 508 places registered with the Home Office as premises where experiments on live animals could be carried out. ("Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals Great Britain 1983": Cmnd. 9311). The Royal College of Surgeons premises at Downe were visited twice in 1984 by an inspector.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspections have been carried out by his Department's inspectors at premises where experimentation on animals has been carried out during the last five years; on how many of these occasions such inspections revealed a cause for complaint; and what action was then taken as a result thereof.

Mr. Mellor: The number of inspections ca the Home Office Cruelty to Animals Inspector past five years is given in table 24 of the "S Experiments on Living Animals Great Brit (Cmnd. 9311). A copy is in the Library of Reports compiled by inspectors on their visits confidence to the Secretary of State. A s infringements of the Cruelty to Animals Act conditions of licences issued under the Act is published statistics (paragraphs 12-16).

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of S Home Department if he will increase the numb carried out by his Department's inspectors used by the Royal College of Surgeons experimentations, in the light of their recent co cruelty.

Mr. Mellor: The case did not concern subject to these statutory controls; but I underst Royal College of Surgeons is to appeal conviction and it would therefore be improper make any comment which might have a bea case.

PRIME MINISTER

Manchester International Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Min gave any consideration to flying from the Unit America into Manchester international airpor when it was learnt that London's Heathrow likely to be non-operational due to freezing fog to avoid delay, she did not seek to fly into M

The Prime Minister: Yes. I considered Manchester or Prestwick. But subsequent chec Royal Air Force showed that Heathrow would the morning of 22 February and that I could fly only minimal loss of working time.

Legal Aid

Mr. Galley asked the Prime Minister whet any plans to reorganise the work of assessing of applicants for civil legal aid which is undertaken by the Department of Health Security.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. F Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Soci and I have agreed that the responsibility for as means of applicants for civil legal aid should fo in Scotland be transferred to the Scottish Home Department. The transfer will take place on 1 A

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State Services has also decided that assessments for E Wales would be more efficiently carried out office rather than, as now, in 11 loc Accordingly, starting as soon as possible after work will be transferred gradually to one office which will form part of the North Fylde ce complex of the Department of Health and Soci

In both cases staff not wishing to transfer wil posts in due course in other local offices of within reasonable daily travelling distance.

ENERGY

Power Cuts

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many power cuts of more than one hour's duration there have been in England and Wales since October 1984.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been no power cuts because of shortage of generating capacity, though electrical faults do occur from time to time which can cause disruptions of supplies in local areas. I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member with details of such interruptions that have occurred since October 1984 and have lasted over 1 hour.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently being taken to supply food for Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan *(a)* by the United Kingdom and *(b)* by the members of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Raison: The figures available for commitments of emergency food aid to Sudan do not distinguish between aid for Sudanese and aid provided for refugees, except where the intended channel is UNHCR; and, in the latter case, do not distinguish between Ethiopian and other refugees.

The Government have this year provided 15,000 tonnes of grain through the World Food Programme, which has been delivered to Port Sudan, and pledged a further 30,000 tonnes, including about 13,000 tonnes of wheatflour for UNHCR's programmes in Sudan.

The European Community has made grants of £4·5 million to UNHCR to buy food and other supplies, and is supplying 25,000 tonnes of cereals through international and voluntary organisations, and discussing with the Government of Sudan the distribution of a further 26,000 tonnes.

Other member states of the Community have so far pledged a total of 83,000 tonnes of cereals.

ENVIRONMENT

Lead in Paint

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to fulfil the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution in 1983 to the effect that the maximum permitted concentration of lead in paint for household use should be progressively reduced to a level comparable to that applied in the United States of America, and that in the meantime all paint containing more lead than this should carry a warning label.

Mr. Waldegrave: Recent research carried out for the Department at the Building Research Establishment has indicated that the removal of lead-based driers from paint has only a marginal effect in lengthening drying times for a few types of paint.

I have placed copies of a summary of the results in the Library, and will also deposit the final report as soon as it is available.

Following discussions with the Government, agreem has been reached with the Paintmakers' Associatio Great Britain that from January next year lead will ceased to be added by member companies to white g primer and undercoat paints—which account for 60 cent. of solvent-based paint sales—and lead will c to be added to all coloured gloss paints and varnishes July 1987, an advance of one year on the Paintmal Association's earlier timetable.

Gloss paint with no deliberately added lead w contain only trace elements of lead and would comply the United States limit of 0·06 per cent. by weight in dry film. (About one-third of solvent-based paints varnishes already contain no added lead; emulsion pa which constitute about 75 per cent. of total decor sales in the United Kingdom are water-based and never contained lead additives).

The Paintmakers' Association has also agreed introduce as soon as practicable an appropriate labe identify paints with no added lead.

I am grateful to the Paintmakers' Association for initiative. Its members account for 90 per cent. of Un Kingdom paint manufacture by volume. The agreem should encourage companies who are not associa members, and any importers, to follow the same route the Government are exploring the possibility of a Un Kingdom initiative to seek to amend current EC legisla in this field.

"Brixton Cares for Kids"

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Environment in whose ownership and control are premises acquired for Brixton Cares for Kids through inner city partnership scheme; when funding ceased that project and why; when funding will be resumed; what lessons are to be drawn from this project.

Sir George Young: The premises acquired for Bri Cares for Kids are owned by Lambeth council. The grant payment under the urban programme was m when the project dissolved itself in September 1984. In circumstances, the question of resuming funding does arise.

The inquiry referred to in my answer of 14 Noven at columns 283-84, has yet to complete its worl understand that Lambeth council has undertaken to k the hon. Member informed of developments.

Olympic Games

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Environment whether Her Majesty's Government has any consultations about holding the 1992 Olympic Ga in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Macfarlane: I refer the hon. Gentleman to answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumf (Sir H. Monro) on Monday 25 February.

Greater London Record Office

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Environment what arrangements he proposes to make the future of the Greater London Record Office in event of the Local Government Bill becoming law.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Secre of State has today written to the lord mayor of

corporation of the City of London setting out arrangements for the City on behalf of Londoners as a whole to take over and run the Greater London Record Office, subject to parliamentary approval for the Local Government Bill. The lord mayor has agreed with the proposal. The arrangement follows discussions between the Department of the Environment and the corporation. It means that the GLRO collection can be maintained intact in the hands of local government and in the charge of the corporation, which has considerable expertise and experience on archieve matters. I am placing a copy of the exchange of letters between the Secretary of State and the lord mayor in the Library.

Reservoirs Act 1975

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made to implement the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Mr. Gow: The Reservoirs Act 1975 is being implemented in stages. Under stage one, essential enabling regulations and regulations covering the appointment of new panels of engineers to carry out the various functions prescribed for qualified civil engineers under the Act came into force throughout England, Wales and Scotland on 8 November 1983, and 20 December 1984 respectively.

Under stage two, further regulations were made on 13 February bringing into effect on 1 April 1985 everywhere in England, Wales and Scotland, except in Greater London and English metropolitan counties those provisions in the 1975 Act:

(i) transferring responsibility for reservoir safety from the district councils to the upper tier;

(ii) providing for local authorities to set up registers of reservoirs; take action in the event of an emergency; make reports to the Secretary of State about steps taken to ensure compliance with the Act; and requiring reservoir undertakers to provide further information about and to carry out more regular monitoring of their reservoirs;

(ii) providing for non-compliance with the Act to be a criminal offence.

To enable local authorities to establish the local registers, reservoir undertakers are required to provide authorities by 1 January 1986 with information about their reservoirs. Local authorities must take steps to inform undertakers of this requirement by 1 July 1985.

The remaining provisions of the Act mainly relating to supervision of a reservoir operations by qualified civil engineers will be implemented later in the third and final stage. The date at present proposed is 1 April 1986.

Implementation in Greater London and English metropolitan counties will follow Parliament's decision on the future of local government in those areas. The Local Government Bill now before Parliament provides for the transfer to the London borough and metropolitan district councils of the functions which the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils would have assumed under the Reservoirs Act 1975. The intention is that the stage two provisions referred to above will be brought into effect in these areas on 1 April 1986 and the third stage provisions on 1 April 1987.

Those local authorities specified in the Reservoirs (Safety Provisions) Act 1930 can continue to use the powers available in the Act until it is repealed. The present intention is to repeal it in all areas except the metropolitan areas in England on 1 April 1986, and in those areas on 1 April 1987.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the sums which *(a)* the Greater London council, *(b)* each of the London borough councils, *(c)* the Common Council of the City of London, *(d)* each of the metropolitan county councils and *(e)* each of the metropolitan district councils have been entitled to spend under (i) section 137 and (ii) section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 during each of the last six years.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *62*]: There is no equivalent limit on expenditure under section 142 to that contained in section 137. The information in respect of expenditure entitlements under section 137 is as follows:

Maximum allowable expenditure under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972

	1979-80 £'000	*1980-81* £'000	*1981-82* £'000	*1982-83* £'000	*1983-84* £'000	*1984-85* £'000
Greater London Council	36,758·228	37,409·626	38,420·372	38,748·400	39,071·200	39,342·600
City of London	4,300·000	4,500·000	4,800·000	4,800·000	5,000·000	5,140·000
Inner London boroughs						
Camden	2,080·000	2,100·000	2,120·000	2,160·000	2,220·000	2,246·000
Greenwich	710·000	710·000	1,109·668	978·922	995·100	1,027·996
Hackney	686·000	694·000	955·456	904·138	880·174	869·390
Hammersmith and Fulham	656·000	660·000	731·260	802·330	814·174	816·650
Islington	927·000	970·000	1,020·000	1,050·000	1,030·000	1,030·000
Kensington and Chelsea	1,340·000	1,350·000	1,378·344	1,380·000	1,380·000	1,400·000
Lambeth	1,110·000	1,100·000	1,243·576	1,228·508	1,210·330	1,171·928
Lewisham	840·000	840·000	1,210·706	1,125·054	1,120·726	1,078·922
Southwark	1,080·000	1,080·000	1,142·784	1,120·000	1,134·000	1,134·000
Tower Hamlets	818·000	840·000	1,014·166	976·340	952·412	904·000
Wandsworth	928·880	950·294	1,333·996	1,290·520	1,234·264	1,256·214
Westminster	5,940·000	6,140·000	6,220·000	6,200·000	6,180·000	6,220·000
Outer London boroughs						
Barking and Dagenham	530·000	528·000	671·130	627·122	605·770	610·694
Barnet	1,154·000	1,154·000	1,175·592	1,196·000	1,207·540	1,200·000
Bexley	740·000	756·400	852·854	872·152	889·168	891·188

	1979-80 £'000	1980-81 £'000	1981-82 £'000	1982-83 £'000	1983-84 £'000	1984-85 £'000
Brent	995·000	997·000	1,008·000	999·400	1,012·822	1,007·400
Bromley	1,020·000	1,030·000	1,207·078	1,182·436	1,234·202	1,223·840
Croydon	1,280·000	1,304·000	1,551·116	1,352·916	1,378·000	1,384·000
Ealing	1,090·000	1,082·000	1,164·006	1,154·954	1,150·430	1,150·432
Enfield	922·000	932·000	1,065·668	1,069·748	1,054·454	1,059·456
Haringey	784·000	810·000	938·136	909·668	845·232	839·600
Harrow	670·000	682·000	793·282	794·708	804·616	798·870
Havering	833·400	844·800	949·344	964·710	978·348	982·950
Hillingdon	1,094·000	1,108·000	1,152·000	1,176·000	1,180·000	1,176·000
Hounslow	934·000	950·000	950·000	972·000	974·000	986·000
Kingston-upon-Thames	536·000	550·000	614·586	598·568	564·048	576·000
Merton	566·800	574·000	748·582	676·860	671·824	686·862
Newham	709·000	776·000	892·644	885·040	848·634	863·350
Redbridge	787·800	792·700	917·342	916·314	935·814	926·824
Richmond-upon-Thames	587·200	586·000	776·960	722·394	724·168	693·096
Sutton	583·000	594·000	675·210	688·108	697·486	705·350
Waltham Forest	760·000	763·626	858·000	868·570	863·226	866·310
Metropolitan counties						
Greater Manchester	9,260·000	9,457·890	9,566·636	8,842·628	8,733·884	8,613·626
Merseyside	5,245·954	5,225·900	5,311·518	4,994·370	4,931·656	4,849·454
South Yorkshire	4,615·046	4,627·918	4,887·124	4,540·324	4,532·316	4,425·106
Tyne and Wear	4,036·380	4,077·660	4,114·060	3,808·326	3,830·124	3,746·008
West Midlands	9,532·280	9,612·700	9,668·140	8,946·006	8,810·206	8,788·542
West Yorkshire	7,224·000	7,326·000	7,491·250	6,936·224	6,848·764	6,848·260
Metropolitan districts						
Barnsley	785·000	793·000	824·558	786·406	773·940	765·702
Birmingham	3,659·400	3,642·000	3,944·452	3,444·978	3,394·042	3,334·422
Bolton	916·600	942·400	923·178	881·246	883·226	869·242
Bradford	1,612·710	1,622·246	1,790·980	1,561·844	1,546·718	1,542·604
Bury	630·514	639·074	652·020	601·926	594·130	587·292
Calderdale	648·540	659·380	739·308	662·654	645·086	643·448
Coventry	1,193·002	1,217·792	1,212·404	1,139·278	1,071·002	1,070·674
Doncaster	1,000·000	1,005·770	1,062·028	982·524	978·796	977·348
Dudley	1,050·000	1,072·000	1,070·136	961·164	950·312	976·100
Gateshead	741·080	751·360	779·154	717·352	711·706	720·340
Kirklees	1,304·760	1,342·218	1,372·292	1,274·768	1,237·824	1,243·528
Knowsley	624·854	614·810	613·668	557·086	556·766	554·308
Leeds	2,590·000	2,606·000	2,723·444	2,429·424	2,353·228	2,358·830
Liverpool	1,750·000	1,732·000	2,009·240	1,762·642	1,735·560	1,679·978
Manchester	1,721·000	1,752·000	2,016·040	1,686·470	1,624·988	1,570·404
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,024·000	1,040·000	1,090·272	961·882	939·304	910·624
North Tyneside	688·500	691·500	702·648	631·874	663·658	650·966
Oldham	770·000	789·930	804·704	742·652	738·696	721·698
Rochdale	738·812	734·324	776·258	709·000	682·472	680·048
Rotherham	884·714	869·820	879·498	856·352	836·730	834·334
Salford	890·000	891·060	1,135·246	1,013·098	979·632	933·580
Sandwell	1,036·430	1,062·500	1,076·612	1,002·314	1,010·382	1,003·810
Sefton	1,004·000	1,016·000	1,049·140	978·744	971·490	962·442
Sheffield	1,945·332	1,959·328	2,031·012	1,831·482	1,822·894	1,802·282
Solihull	740·000	750·000	682·238	664·444	671·160	690·414
South Tyneside	566·000	574·000	663·508	567·468	556·988	526·350
St. Helens	666·970	668·342	675·020	632·938	633·370	631·300
Stockport	1,000·540	1,011·580	1,041·594	976·514	963·574	965·576
Sunderland	1,016·800	1,020·800	1,105·442	964·446	949·036	965·168
Tameside	771·400	783·800	777·836	724·944	728·974	713·020
Trafford	769·204	786·230	793·526	739·436	742·758	745·814
Wakefield	1,073·280	1,095·820	1,142·280	1,037·862	1,064·258	1,062·582
Walsall	927·120	937·000	959·382	883·106	865·612	867·118
Wigan	1,064·750	1,093·186	1,116·894	1,026·042	1,016·000	1,007·426
Wirral	1,151·600	1,203·200	1,214·988	1,119·000	1,110·904	1,110·620
Wolverhampton	920·120	920·000	960·248	852·214	846·520	850·816

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Oxford University

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what grants were made from public funds to the University of Oxford for each year since 1978-79, in constant 1983-84 prices and in cash terms, excluding the element of the grant paid since 1982-83 to compensate for the loss of fee income from the reduction in tuition fees for home students.

Sir Keith Joseph: Recurrent and capital grants made available to the University of Oxford on the advice of the University Grants Committee and the Computer Board in each financial year since 1978-79, excluding elements to compensate for the loss of fee income from the reduction of the home undergraduate tuition fee in 1982-83 and its

freezing in 1983-84, were as follows. (The real terms figures are the cash figures adjusted to a 1985-86 base, using GDP deflators which provide an estimate of the average movement of prices across the economy as a whole.)

	University Grants Committee recurrent	Computer Board recurrent	University Grants Committee capital	Computer Board capital	Total Cash	Real terms
1978-79	19,769,893	732,210	1,962,901	1,332,359	23,797,363	40,412,595
1979-80	23,862,000	781,608	2,608,063	224,328	27,475,999	39,912,266
1980-81	31,429,163	495,536	2,987,961	460,064	35,372,724	43,322,381
1981-82	32,558,053	423,956	3,344,824	253,278	36,580,111	40,735,096
1982-83	34,311,545	486,889	3,160,823	49,980	38,009,237	39,687,212
1983-84	37,404,168	517,303	3,163,190	141,155	41,225,816	41,225,816

These figures are not entirely comparable from year to year because of various other changes in funding arrangements during the period.

Maintained Schools

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been carried out by his Department into any correlation between increases in the incomes of those employed in the education service and the quality of the education provided in maintained schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department has not conducted research into this specific correlation.

Residential Special Schools (Working Party)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the current membership of the joint working party (residential special schools) indicating by whom they are appointed, how often they meet, and who convenes their meetings;

(2) what are the responsibilities, functions and duties of the joint working party (residential special schools); and whether the results of its considerations are enshrined in statutory instruments.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that the joint working party (residential special schools) operates under the auspices of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils, from whom I suggest the hon. Member seeks further information. This is not a matter for my right hon. Friend. The working party's recommendations are not enshrined in statutory instruments.

Mathematics

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional measures he intends to introduce to improve the standard of mathematics in secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have introduced a range of measures in the light of the Cockcroft report, and will continue to take action to disseminate and encourage the implementation of the report's findings. In addition, support under the education support grant scheme will be provided, from September 1985, for additional mathematics advisers and advisory teachers in almost all LEAs. The introduction of the GCSE examination will encourage further improvements in the teaching of mathematics.

Burnham Committee (Replacement)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to seek to replace the Burnham committee with an alternative negotiating body.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have no such plans.

Overseas Students

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will bring up to date the information relating to Syrian, Libyan, Iranian and Iraqi students given in reply to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 24 July 1984, *Official Report*, column 548.

Mr. Brooke: Approximate numbers studying in the United Kingdom in universities, FE colleges and some private sector colleges in 1983-84 were:

	Number
Iran	2,400
Iraq	1,900
Libya	1,800
Syria	300

This information will be contained in the British Council booklet "Statistics of Overseas Students in the UK 1983-84" currently under preparation; a copy will be placed in the Library of the House on publication.

Teacher-Pupil Statistics

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list average teacher-pupil statistics for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Dunn: The available information is as follows:

		Pupils per teacher	
		Up to 1st level*	Up to 2nd level†
Australia	1981	20·1	16·6
Austria	1982	17·7	13·5
Belgium	1981	19·4	n/a
Canada	1979	19·0	n/a
Finland	1982	15·0	14·8
France	1981	22·0	n/a
Greece	1980	23·9	22·3
Ireland	1981	28·4	n/a
Italy	1981	15·9	13·4
Japan	1981	24·2	n/a
Luxembourg	1982	14·5	n/a

		Pupils per teacher	
		*Up to 1st level**	*Up to 2nd level†*
Netherlands	1982	19·3	17·5
New Zealand	1975	19·2	n/a
Portugal	1975	19·9	n/a
Spain	1981	19·2	n/a
Turkey	1981	27·5	26·0
United Kingdom	1982-83	22·1‡	17·8‖

* For all countries except the United Kingdom the figures relate to pupils undertaking education in schools up to about age 11.

† For all countries except the United Kingdom the figures relate to pupils undertaking general education in schools plus students attending similar level courses in colleges.

‡ Nursery and primary schools only.

‖ Schools only.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list average teachers' salaries for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Pupils (Cost)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list average expenditure per pupil for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Higher Education (Sabbatical Leave)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are currently at institutions of higher education on sabbatical leave to fulfil students union commitments whilst in receipt of local education authority grants; and what is the annual cost of these sabbatical students.

Mr. Brooke: Students on sabbatical leave to fulfil student union commitments are not eligible for mandatory grants. They are paid by their student unions out of public funds allocated to the unions by the institutions concerned. Information about the total numbers and costs of student union sabbatical posts is not available, although the last known survey of universities showed that in 1979 80 per cent. had five sabbatical officers or fewer and 60 per cent. had four or fewer.

Primary Schools

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the primary schools built before 1900 currently in use in Cornwall, together with their original year of construction.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not maintain such a list.

Open University

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is ready to publish the report of the visiting committee to the Open University; and if he will now announce the Open University grant for 1985 and the indicated grant for 1986-87.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now make a statement on the Open University's budgetary allocation for 1985 and the provisional allocation for 1986 and 1987.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have considered the Open University visiting committee's report. A copy of it has been sent to the university with a letter notifying its grants for 1985 and indicated grants for 1986 and 1987. Copies of the report and the notification of grants have been placed in the Library.

Under-fives

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research into the education of under-fives is currently being supported by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have asked Professor Margaret Clark of Birmingham University to carry out a critical evaluation of research into the education of under-fives undertaken over recent years — and she has agreed. There is now a very substantial amount of research findings available in this field and there is a need, which I believe is shared by academics, practitioners, administrators and elected members of LEAs, to take stock and assess the validity and significance of the results of this research. I should emphasise that this does not imply any expansion of expenditure provision for the education of this age group: the objectives are to assist those who wish to refer to existing research, to guide future policy on research in this area, and ultimately to facilitate better deployment of existing resources. Professor Clark has been asked to let the Department have her report by September 1986. She alone will be personally responsible for the judgments and opinions expressed.

TRANSPORT

Holidair

71. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the licensing system operated by the Civil Aviation Authority following the licensing of Holidair now backed by former directors of Budget Holidays.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Transac Services Ltd. which now trades as Holidair, has been licensed as a tour operator by the Civil Aviation Authority since 1978. The authority is aware that two people formerly connected with the Budget Group are now involved in Holidair. If a change of ownership takes place the authority will have to consider, in accordance with Regulation 4(3) of the Civil Aviation (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) Regulations 1972, as amended, whether the new holder of the licence is a fit person, and has resources and financial arrangements adequate for discharging his obligation. If the authority is not satisfied, it has a duty to suspend or revoke the licence.

Trains (Hazardous Materials)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require that

trains carrying hazardous materials are not permitted to pass through tunnels in excess of 100 m in length at the same time as passenger trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. This would place an unwarranted restriction on the movement of hazardous goods by rail, which has a good safety record in this country. The inspector inquiring into the derailment and subsequent fire in Summit tunnel last December is, however, examining the possible need for more control of the movement of hazardous goods trains through tunnels and this question will be addressed in his published report. British Rail already regulates trains passing through the Severn tunnel so as to ensure that passenger trains are not in the tunnel at the same time as trains conveying hazardous goods.

London Regional Transport (Bus Services)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact on London Regional Transport's bus services due to congestion caused by the increased number of coaches operating into central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand from LRT that it is keeping the situation under review. If my hon. Friend has any particular problem in mind I shall be glad to discuss it with him.

Coach Services (Central London)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner on the impact on rush-hour traffic congestion of the increased number of coach services operating into central London.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no plans at present to call for such a report.

EMPLOYMENT

Illegal Child Employment

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were convicted of illegal child employment offences in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Responsibility for the enforcement of legislation restricting the employment of children in industrial undertakings, such as factories, construction sites, mines and quarries etc., and in agriculture falls to the Health and Safety Executive. The numbers of employers prosecuted by HSE inspectors and convicted for illegal child employment offences are:

	Number
1980	8
1981	4
1982	3
1983	*3
1984	*1

* Provisional.

Youth Training Scheme and Community Programm

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State Employment whether the Manpower Servic Commission has issued instructions to its staff preventi disclosure of accidents occurring on the youth scheme a community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State Employment if he is satisfied with the operation of t community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes, although we are continua seeking means of improving the effectiveness a efficiency of the programme.

Information Technology and Telecommunications

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State Employment whether he anticipates that there will b growth in demand for skilled staff in *(a)* informati technology and *(b)* telecommunications in the n decade; and what steps are being taken to meet a additional requirements.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government's strategy directed towards encouraging industry to assume its pro responsibilities for identifying and meeting its manpov requirements. Our support for employers' training effo will be focused on those skills in real demand, particula in information and new technologies. The first two repo of the information technology skills shortage committe including representatives of Government, industry a education indicate a growing demand for staff w information technology skills, and made recommendatio for action. Its final report is due to be published short

International Labour Organisation

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State Employment what was the date on which the denunciati by Her Majesty's Government of International Labo Organisation Convention No. 95 on labour clauses (pub contracts) was registered by the International Labo Organisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The United Kingdom denunciation of International Labour Conventions No. concerning labour clauses in public contracts and No. concerning the protection of wages were registered by t International Labour Office on 20 September 1982 and September 1983 respectively. Each denunciation to effect 12 months after its registration.

Small Textile Firms

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State Employment what were the main conclusions t emerged from the campaign conducted by the Wag Inspectorate and the Health and Safety Executiv Factory Inspectorate concerning working conditions small textile firms; and whether he will make a stateme

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The object of the campaign w to check the extent to which small firms in the textile a clothing industries were complying with health and saf regulations and, where, appropriate, with the le minimum wages council rates of pay and conditions. T

three areas selected by the Health and Safety Executive's Factory Inspectorate and the Wages Inspectorate for investigation were Leicester, the east end of London and the West Midlands. Reports on the outcome of their inquiries are published today and I have placed copies in the Library.

In general, the reports show that the majority of the small firms covered were complying with their legal obligations under the health and safety and wages council regulations. Although contraventions of the law were discovered, most were of a relatively minor nature and were often due to ignorance of the detailed requirements of the law. A major lesson of the campaign is that the relevant inspectorates should place a greater emphasis on their role in supporting small employers in the clothing and textile trades by helping them to realise the positive advantages of ensuring that their premises are safe and meet health standards and that they are properly registered with the appropriate authorities. This reinforces the Government's policy of helping small businesses prosper by providing them with good advice and the right information.

Working Children

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the recent report by the Low Pay Unit on working children, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have nothing to add at present to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 1 February 1985 at column 329.

Chemical Installations (Safety)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied that a disaster similar to that which occurred in Bhopal could not happen in Scotland; and if he will make a statement as to safety measures undertaken and in force.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *19*]: No installation in Scotland is in any way comparable with the Union Carbide factory at Bhopal.

There is a comprehensive legal framework in this country for the control of hazardous installations. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 there is a legal obligation on employers to conduct their undertakings in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees or members of the public are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

The general provisions of this Act are further strengthened by provisions in the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982 and the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984.

These regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average earnings of workers employed in the United Kingdom's textile and clothing industries in the years 1979 to 1984; and if he will compare the increase in earnings against changes in the retail price index and increases in the earnings of all employees during this period.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *128*]: The following table sets out information from the new earnings survey on the average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult manual employees in the textile and clothing industry, the percentage change in average earnings between 1979 and 1984 for this group and for all employees and the percentage change in retail prices over the same period.

	*Textiles and clothing industry**	*Male manual employees aged 21 and over†*	*Female manual employees aged 18 and over†*
		£	£
1979		84·1	51·3
1980		96·7	60·8
1981		105·8	67·2
1982		111·8	71·9
1983		122·7	77·7
1984		130·9	82·8
Percentage increases between 1979 and 1984			
Manual employees in textiles and clothing		55·6	61·4
Manual employees in all industries and services		66·6	69·0
Index of retail prices	63·3		

Notes:

* Order XIII and minimum list headings 441-9 of Standard Industrial Classification, 1968. Figures for 1983 and 1984 have been adjusted from the Standard Industrial Classification 1980 to a comparable basis.

† For 1983 and 1984 figures based on employees on adult rates have been adjusted to the earlier definition.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment what warnings are carried on containers of fluoride for addition to water supplies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *129*]: The majority of water authorities use hydrofluorosilicic acid solutions for fluoridation, though some limited use is made of sodium fluorosilicate.

Hydrofluorosilicic acid solutions — also known as fluorosilicic acid or fluorsilicic acid — are usually delivered in bulk by road tankers subject to the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981. The tanker would need to be placarded to warn of the corrosive properties of the solution, unless diluted to a safe level. The placarding would include the hazard warning sign for a corrosive substance together with other information for the emergency services in the event of a fire, spillage or other accident.

Sodium fluorosilicate, a powder, is usually delivered in bags. These have to be labelled in accordance with the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations, 1984, to show the toxic properties of the undiluted substance. The label would

carry a danger symbol and the risk phrase "toxic by inhalation, in contact with the skin and if swallowed"; it would also include prescribed safety advice.

These precautions are aimed at safety in conveyance and use of the substances named. They have no bearing on water supplies treated with these substances.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East given in the *Official Report*, 25 July 1984, column *661*, on fatal accidents on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *129*]: The following is a list of fatalities on the youth training scheme since 1 February 1984:

Date of fatality	*Cause of fatality*
27 July 1984	Road traffic accident
22 August 1984	Road traffic accident
24 September 1984	Dumper truck overturned

A further fatality, on 12 February 1985, has been notified to the Manpower Services Commission. An investigation, to determine the exact cause of the incident and whether it is reportable, is being carried out by the local enforcing authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cleaning Services

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Lord Privy Seal how much was spent in 1982-83 and 1983-84 and how much is due to be spent in 1984-85 on cleaning services for the House.

Mr. Biffen: The costs of cleaning services are in part borne by the House itself and in part by the Property Services Agency. The figures for the costs borne by the House are:

	£
1982-83	255,468
1983-84	259,366
1984-85	273,629

Cleaning costs borne by the Property Services Agency for the whole parliamentary estate, including the House of Lords and all parliamentary outbuildings, are:

	£
1982-83	279,222
1983-84	358,793
*1984-85	380,000

* Estimate.

A detailed breakdown of these latter costs between the two Houses is not available; but on a rough proportional basis some 66 per cent. can be attributed to the House of Commons.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Short Brothers Ltd.

72. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of St for Northern Ireland whether recent increases productivity achieved by Short Brothers Ltd. accord w the trend for British industry in general.

Dr. Boyson: Short's productivity has shown continuing increase in recent years, and, so far as it possible to make such comparisons, in line with t productivity improvement of British industry in genera

Industrial Development Board

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Northe Ireland what was the total sum of money spent by t Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland promotion and marketing for the financial years 1982- and 1983-84; and what is the expected spending for t financial year 1984-85.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	£000
1982-83	2,018
1983-84	4,257
1984-85	*3,771

* Estimate.

Leisure/Recreation Centres

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of Sta for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 7 Februar *Official Report*, columns *651-53*, what is the estimate trading loss or profit at each of these leisure/recreatio centres; and what is the equivalent in pence per pound rates in the respective district councils.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not hel centrally and could be obtained only at disproportiona cost.

Churches

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State fo Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Repo* a list of those churches which were examined and did no meet the criteria used to decide which churches should b listed as historic churches; and if he will indicate to whic denomination they belonged.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested could b provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State fo Northern Ireland if he will indicate the criteria used t decide which churches should be listed churches i Northern Ireland at *(a)* A. *(b)* B+ and *(c)* B.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department of th Environment's architects survey buildings of specia architectural or historic interest and only after consultatio with the Historic Buildings Council does the Departmen decide which buildings are to be listed and placed in on of the following summarised categories:

Category A — These are buildings of national importance or fine, little altered examples of some particular date or style. Buildings placed in this category are of such importance that their preservation is a matter of top priority.

Category B+ — These are buildings which are regarded as outstanding in a local context. Although they are of specific interest they do not warrant inclusion in the top category. Approximately 10 per cent. of "B" buildings would fall into this particular category.

Category B — These are buildings of local importance or good examples of some period or style which may have been somewhat altered or are of lesser interest. To be graded category "B" does not mean that the building is of necessity a large one or a very famous one.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

TUC (General Secretary)

13. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend met Trades Union Congress leaders, including the general secretary, on 12 March 1984 when the subjects discussed included industrial restructuring, Government support for research and development, regional policy as well as industrial policy in the European Community.

20. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

23. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

24. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

26. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

37. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend met Trades Union Congress leaders, including the general secretary, on 12 March 1984 when the subjects discussed included industrial restructuring, Government support for research and development, regional policy as well as industrial policy in the European Community.

Footwear Industry

15. **Mr. Budgen** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of the footwear industry.

Mr. Trippier: The recovery of the domestic footwear market last year has contributed to a stabilisation of employment in the United Kingdom industry over recent months. Exports showed a promising growth of 7 per cent. in the first nine months.

Bankruptcies

16. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will conduct a study of the marginal effects of higher interest rates on the level of company bankruptcies.

Mr. Pattie: No. Many factors contribute to insolvencies and a study would be unable to isolate one particular marginal factor.

Car Prices (European Community)

17. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken to reduce the disparity in car prices in the European Economic Community member states.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Commission has now adopted a regulation which should help to ensure that consumers benefit from a genuine common market for motor vehicles in which they are free to buy, across geographical boundaries if necessary, from whichever source offers the most favourable terms. This should contribute to a continuing erosion of price differentials.

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

18. **Mr. Michael Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what role he envisages for his Department in the introduction of direct broadcasting by satellite in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Pattie: The Department's role in this area is to encourage profitable development, investment and services which will position the British space and electronics industries and programme makers well in future markets.

Advanced Technology

19. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance he will provide to industry in 1985-86 for research and development in advanced technology.

Mr. Pattie: Last November I announced a review of the Department's support for industrial research and development. Obviously I cannot anticipate the outcome of this review, but an announcement will be made shortly.

Wine Labelling

21. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce regulations to improve consumer protection regarding the descriptions on the labels distinguishing English wine from British wine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have no evidence that existing legislation on trade descriptions is inadequate to protect the interests of consumers in this area.

Small Firms

22. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the net number of small businesses established in the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for 1980 to 1983 were published in an article in *British Business*, copies of which were placed in the Library. These show that in 1983 there was a net surplus of 42,564 businesses.

49. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he is doing to encourage small firms to accept equity injections rather than loans to cover their needs for risk capital.

Mr. Trippier: The business expansion scheme continues to provide a major incentive to the development of equity finance and I am looking at ways of encouraging small firms to make full use of this source of funds. In addition, the importance of equity finance to small firms has been stressed in the help for growing businesses seminars which my Department has sponsored over the past year.

51. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet received the conclusions of the interdepartmental scrutiny of the administrative and legislative burdens placed on small firms.

Mr. Trippier: I have received the central report of the scrutiny team, based on studies in seven Departments of regulatory burdens on small businesses. I am considering how this should be followed up and will make a further announcement in due course.

56. **Mr. Carttiss** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will make a statement about the scrutiny of administrative and legislative burdens on small firms.

Mr. Trippier: I have received the central report of the scrutiny team based on studies in seven Departments of regulatory burdens on small businesses. I am considering how this should be followed up and will make a further announcement in due course.

Plessey Company

25. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with the Plessey company.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with the Plessey company.

Schoolchildren (Work Experience)

27. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that schoolchildren receive first hand experience of the working of industry and commerce.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is involved in promoting such experience through a range of projects and organistions, notably the schools curriculum industry project, project trident and the science and technology regional organisations.

Schools (Computer Facilities)

28. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide further support for the expansion of computer facilities in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Butcher: The provision of computers in schools is primarily the responsibility of local education authorities. My Department is considering, however, whether to provide any further assistance to LEA schools to build on the success of the micros in s scheme.

Regional Assistance

29. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of St Trade and Industry how many applications for re assistance have been received in the newly desi assisted area in the west midlands.

Mr. Butcher: As at 15 February the West Mi regional office had received more than 4,300 in about regional selective assistance, generating a t 185 applications for grant.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

30. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for and Industry what representations he has received the Silberston report on the multi-fibre arrangemer

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Frie Minister for Trade has received representations on be future of the multi-fibre arrangement and on the Silb report from companies in the textile and clothing ind representatives of employers and employees i industry,consumers', importers' and retailers' org tions, retailers and a number of hon. Members.

CBI (Chairman)

31. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for and Industry when he last met the chairman Confederation of British Industry; and what matter discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend and the president and director general of the CBI on 29 Ja 1985. Among the subjects discussed were the Budget representations published on 23 January.

Privatisation

32. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for and Industry whether the performance of ente returned to the private sector in which his Departme retained a financial interest has improved or worse

Mr. Pattie: The performance of those ente returned to the private sector has justified expectations. The general pattern is increased turnov higher profits leading to increased investment.

British Tourist Authority

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trad Industry if he will make it his policy that the budget British Tourist Authority is at least maintained i terms at its 1981 level.

Mr. Butcher: The Government fully recogni important contribution and potential of the to industry to the growth of the United Kingdom ec and employment. My Department will, therefore, s encourage the development, growth and interna competitiveness of the United Kingdom tourism ind The future level of the British Tourist Authority's gr aid will be set with this objective in mind and with to the wider context of the need to contain the gro public expenditure generally.

Retail Grocery Trade

34. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry if he will estimate the share of the retail grocery trade in the United Kingdom likely to be commanded by the six largest grocery chains by 1990.

Mr. Trippier: I am not prepared to estimate future market shares, which will depend on the uncertain effects of many factors.

Regional Industrial Development Grant

35. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received following his recent decision to declare a moratorium on payments of regional industrial development grants.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry have received five letters containing representations about the moratorium on payments of regional development grants.

There have also been a few representations to Scottish and Welsh Office Ministers and to officials of the Departments concerned.

Large Firms (Payment of Bills)

36. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will promulgate a Government code of practice to encourage large companies to pay small firms' bills on time.

Mr. Trippier: I have invited representatives of industry to examine possible ways of encouraging the prompt payment of bills, including a code of practice.

Illegal Broadcasting

38. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to act against illegal broadcasting businesses.

Mr. Butcher: Illegal broadcasting on the United Kingdom mainland is not usually carried out by limited companies with separate legal personalities. However, I intend that action should be taken against illegal broadcasting no matter how it is organised.

Interdepartmental Working Parties (Evidence)

39. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make arrangements to accept oral and written evidence for the four interdepartmental working parties on training 14 to 18-year-olds, small businesses, competition policy and the reduction of controls and regulations.

Mr. Trippier: The four interdepartmental groups, which are being chaired by the Minister without Portfolio, are not taking formal evidence. However, the Minister and his officials in the Enterprise Unit have already been in contact with a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the four topics under discussion. The Minister without Portfolio would welcome further views on these and other aspects of the encouragement of enterprise.

Design for Design Policy

40. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report progress on his Design for Design policy; and what further initiatives he proposes to take.

Mr. Butcher: The strategy document "Design for Design: a Framework for Action", which I announced in May 1984, was the result of a comprehensive review of Government policy on design. A strategy group was established to consider the most effective ways of meeting the objectives described in that document. The group has produced a constructive report, which I have welcomed. I am now considering the recommendations in the report.

In the meantime, the Design for Design policies will continue. The success of our design advisory service funded consultancy scheme has been maintained, and an exhibition of completed projects from the scheme is currently touring the country. We are supporting various initiatives in the field of design education including the "Young Designers into Industry" scheme which has recently been launched by the Royal Society of Arts. This scheme will give young design graduates a period of planned work experience.

I intend to continue to pursue a vigorous design policy, with the objective of improving design performance in British industry and thus enhancing our competitiveness particularly in consumer goods, in world markets.

VAT (Children's Footwear)

41. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the implications for the United Kingdom footwear industry of an extension of value added tax to children's footwear.

Mr. Trippier: It is difficult to predict the possible effects of such an extension, but I have received representations from the footwear industry. These representations have been drawn to the attention of Treasury Ministers.

Heavy Engineering Industry

42. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what actions his Department is taking to develop the heavy engineering industry.

Mr. Butcher: As with many other industries, the heavy engineering sector has received Governmental assistance under the Science and Technology Act, through the support for innovation scheme, and through grants made under the Industry Acts. In addition, a number of heavy engineering firms have taken advantage of the teaching company scheme organised jointly by my Department and the Science and Engineering Research Council.

British engineering industry participation in overseas projects has in many cases benefited also from Governmental help on export credits and aid and trade provision.

Asbestos (Alternative Materials)

43. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance his Department is offering to companies to help them to develop alternative suitable materials to asbestos.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is assisting under the support for innovation scheme a number of asbestos substitution projects, the details of which are subject to commercial confidentiality. The scheme is currently under review.

School Curricula (Wealth Creation and Enterprise)

44. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department will take steps to ensure that school curricula give due weight to the importance of wealth creation and enterprise.

Mr. Trippier: The responsibility for school curricula rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as the local education authorities, and individual schools. My Department's industry-education unit has, however, been responsible for a number of initiatives designed to improve young people's understanding of the wealth creation process.

We have to this end strongly supported the schools curriculum industry project, which, through a network of co-ordinators in England and Wales, encourages curriculum developments, with the aim of creating wider understanding of industry and wealth creation in schools.

We have encouraged industry-education activities by supporting local and national projects and working closely with a number of agencies and link bodies. We have provided resource materials for use in schools (for example the video series "Foundations of Wealth"); and sponsored conferences (for example the Careers Research and Advisory Centre conference "Education for Enterprise" in 1984).

We have set ourselves four specific targets for Industry Year 1986: every secondary school to have links with at least one industrialist or commercial company; every secondary school to have its own mini-company; every LEA to have an individual or body with clear responsibility for promoting school industry links; and every LEA to introduce technology as an examinable subject. Many of these activities are joint initiatives with industry, other Government Departments, and others active in this area.

We are also giving increasing priority to the development of entrepreneurial attitudes among young people.

Competition

45. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional measures he intends to take in 1985 further to promote competition.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend will continue to seek to promote competition across the whole range of his responsibilities. 1985 has already seen the publication of a White Paper on financial services which gives priority to competition, and an extension of the role of the Director General of Fair Trading in civil aviation. A European Commission regulation on selective distribution systems for motor vehicles, adopted with the support of the Government, comes into force in July, with the aim of ensuring freer play of market forces in the Community market for motor vehicles. The implications for competition will also be a major element in his review of the legislation on intellectual property rights. My right hon. Friend will be examining the scope for further relaxation of advertising and other restrictions professions. He will continue to exercise hi sibilities under the Fair Trading and Competitio will also play a full part in ensuring that the G as a whole continues to promote competitio benefit of consumers, as it has already don policies as the liberalisation of telecommunicati long distance coach services, the ending of the monopoly on the sale of spectacles, and the a price controls.

Value Added Network Services Licens

46. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of Trade and Industry when he now proposes to consultative document on value added networ licensing.

Mr. Pattie: Shortly.

Financial Services (White Paper)

47. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Industry what representations he has received his White Paper on financial services.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has received of written and oral representations about the W from a variety of interests.

Coal Industry Dispute

48. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State and Industry if he will commission a study on on small businesses of the miners' strike.

Mr. Trippier: No. I do not need to commissi to appreciate that small businesses in mining co are suffering economic difficulties because of These difficulties have often come to my atten sympathise because they are not of their making Government's. In mining communities, as elsew help firms to cope with business problems by the of confidential advice through the Small Firms

Warship Building Yards (Privatisatio

50. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State and Industry when he expects to be able to a privatisation of British Shipbuilders' warship yards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my right ho announced on 25 July 1984, he has aske Shipbuilders to complete the sale of its warshi interests by 31 March 1986.

Office of Telecommunications

52. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Se State for Trade and Industry if he will make a about the functions and role of the Telecommunications.

Mr. Pattie: The functions and role of the General of Telecommunications and of the Telecommunications are as set out Telecommunications Act 1984.

The Act imposes on the director a number functions, including the enforcement of conditi

licences granted to telecommunications operators and the investigation of complaints that are made about the provision of telecommunications services and apparatus. All the director's functions are carried out having regard to the general duties which are set out in section 3 of the Act and which include the maintenance and promotion of effective competition in telecommunications and the promotion of the interests of consumers, purchasers and other users of telecommunication services and apparatus in respect of prices, quality and variety.

Amble

53. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will visit Amble, Northumberland in order to assess the value to the area of regional and European Economic Community aid to industry.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans to visit Amble.

Manufacturing Industry

54. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to encourage British manufacturing industry to take a larger share of the home market.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The best way for British manufacturing industry to achieve this is by improving its competitiveness . My Department's work is directed towards this aim through the promotion of a climate conducive to business and enterprise and the encouragement of increased efficiency, adaptability and innovation.

65. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month five years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For the three months to December 1984 the index of production for manufacturing is 101, based on 1980 equal to 100. This is 8 per cent. lower than the index of production for manufacturing industry in the three months to December 1979.

Investor Protection (White Paper)

55. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the public reaction to the White Paper, Cmnd. 9422 on investor protection.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied with the public reaction so far.

European Space Agency (Meeting)

57. **Mr. Haywood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Ministerial Council Meeting of the European Space Agency in Rome.

Mr. Pattie: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 4 February, at columns 395-96.

Imports and Exports

58. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the value of *(a)* oil imports and exports and *(b)* non-oil manufactured products imports and exports for the current financial year.

Mr. Butcher: Information is not available for the current financial year. Data for 1984 as a whole are as follows:

United Kingdom Trade in Oil and Manufactures
£ million
Balance of payments basis

	1984
Oil	
Imports	7,774
Exports	14,910
Manufactures	
Imports	50,380
Exports	46,539

East-West Trade Seminars

59. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will consider initiating the resumption of the series of East-West trade seminars on the promotion, marketing and business contracts provided for under the Helsinki agreement, but which have been suspended since the 5th seminar in Posnan in 1979.

Mr. Butcher: No initiative is required because the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has already arranged for a sixth seminar to be held in Geneva from 25 to 27 March this year.

Greater London (Industrial Development Projects)

60. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he is having with the London Boroughs Association on industrial development projects in Greater London.

Mr. Trippier: None.

National Economic Development Office

61. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Director General of the National Economic Development Office; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend and other Ministers of the Department of Trade and Industry regularly meet the Director General of the National Economic Development Office at meetings of the National Economic Development Council. My right hon. Friend last attended NEDC in April 1984 when the matters discussed included the 1984 Budget, the United Kingdom labour market and the review of sector assessments by the Economic Development committees.

Manufactured Goods

62. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on developments in the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Trade in manufactured goods, on a balance of payments basis, was in deficit in 1984 by £3·8 billion. At the same time, however, the current account as a whole was broadly in balance.

66. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's surplus or deficit in manufacturing trade with the European Economic Community and the rest of the world, respectively, in 1984 on the overseas trade statistics basis.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1984 there was a crude deficit on trade in manufactures with the European Community of £8·4 billion, and a crude surplus of £2·2 billion with the rest of the world. On the *Overseas Trade Statistics* basis, on which these balances are derived, the valuation of imports includes freight and insurance costs.

Japan

63. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the volume of British exports to Japan.

Mr. Trippier: United Kingdom exports to Japan in 1984 grew to £926 million in 1984 from £798 million in the previous year, an increase of 16 per cent. This is encouraging, and my Department and the British Overseas Trade Board, particularly through the Exports to Japan Unit and the Japan Trade Advisory Group, in collaboration with the British embassy in Tokyo, are continually encouraging British exporters to explore the opportunities offered by the Japanese market.

Horseriding (Headgear)

64. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is proposing to support the voluntary bodies encouraging those horseriders to wear BS 6473 standard riding hats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has issued a press notice alerting the riding public to the dangers of not wearing hats to the new standard, BS 6473. Copies of the notice have been placed in the Library.

The Department will also be writing to suppliers of riding hats, reminding them of the new standard and pointing out that hats which do not meet the new standard may become illegal under the general safety duty proposed in last year's White Paper on the "Safety of Goods" (Cmnd. 9302).

Nationalised Industries (Monitoring)

67. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of the nationalised industries sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Butcher: Yes, in general, but there is always room for improvement. Appraisal of monitoring techniques will ocntinue and improvements introduced where necessary.

French Schools (Computer Supplies)

68. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that orders to supply French schools with computers will be open to competition from British manufacturers.

Mr. Pattie: One British manufacturer is among those invited by the French authorities to put forward proposals for the supply of microcomputers to French schools. But it is not clear whether the project will be open to other British manufacturers. I am seeking clarification of the position from the French authorities.

ASEAN (Export Potential)

69. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Secr for Trade and Industry what assessment he future export potential in the Association o Asian Nation countries.

Mr. Trippier: My Department and the So trade advisory group of the British Overseas on the basis of regular assessment, regard region as one of the most promising areas fo world and give every encouragement to Brit to explore the opportunities offered by the ma countries.

Public Purchasing Initiative

70. **Mr. Ward** asked the Secretary of St and Industry if he will make a statem Department's public purchasing initiative.

Mr. Butcher: The aim of the public initiative is to use public purchasing to suppliers' competitiveness, consistent with need to get value for money. It is the p Government as a whole, not just the Departm and Industry. The recent report by the Man Personnel Office on "Government Purchasing the principles of the public purchasing initiati that its implementation by purchasing Depa been patchy. The Department is continuing to policy throughout the public sector while a r methodology of the PPI is under way. recommendations should help its operation i far as central Government are concerned.

Companies (Prosecutions)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State fo Industry how many prosecutions were underta of companies which had failed to file compa

Mr. Fletcher: The number was 2,928.

Regional Development Policy

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of Sta and Industry what recent representations he about changes in Government regional policy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 206 written on the changes to regional industrial policy received since I announced them on 28 No addition, Ministers in the Department have h of meetings with right hon. and hon. Membe both local and more general issues o development in the context of the new policy

COCOM

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary Trade and Industry what assessment he has barrier to trade presented by COCOM regardin of products falling within its remit where have a technological or cost advantage; and if a statement.

Mr. Channon: No such assessment has The aim of the embargo is to control the export

agreed by the COCOM partners to be strategically sensitive, and does not have regard to the cost or technological advantage of manufacturers in any one country.

Hotels and Guest Houses (Registration and Classification)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate for the other European Economic Community countries the legislative requirements for hotels and guest houses to participate in schemes of registration and classification, together with exemptions on size or other features.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My Department has no comprehensive information about hotel registration and classification schemes operating in other EC countries. However, research carried out in 1983 by the English tourist board indicated that all other EC countries operated some form of compulsory hotel registration and licensing which in some cases also involved hotel classification. I will ask the ETB to write to my hon. Friend.

Regional Aid

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration is taken of the funds available for regional assistance from the European Economic Community when allocating funds for regional aid.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The expected contribution from the European Regional Development Fund is taken into account in planning our total expenditure on regional industrial aid, and that expenditure is higher than it would be without the Community funds. The expected amounts of ERDF assistance are shown in the public expenditure White Paper alongside planned levels of domestic expenditure under the same programme headings.

Children's Nightwear

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will extend flame resistant regulations to all children's nightwear including pyjamas.

Mr. Fletcher: My Department has just completed a consultation exercise with a large number of consumer, trade and enforcement bodies on new regulations for nightwear flammability. Under the proposed regulations children's nightdresses and dressing gowns will have to meet the flammability requirements of BS 5722:1984. All other nightwear including children's pyjamas will have to carry a label relating to its fire performance. The consumer bodies are generally happy with the proposed scope of the regulations.

Subject to any views the European Commission may have, I would hope to submit the new regulations for parliamentary approval shortly.

Paint (Pesticides)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken or plans to take to regulate the addition of pesticides to paint.

Mr. Fletcher: The Food and Environment Protection Bill now before Parliament will empower Ministers to regulate the use of pesticides. Ministers will be consulting interested organisations on the scope of the regulations.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is currently consulting interested parties about separate regulations under the Control of Pollution Act controlling the use of marine anti-fouling paints containing organo-tin compounds.

Bolton (Business Start-ups)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimate for public sector assistance in 1984-85 for schemes designed to help new business start-ups in Bolton.

Mr. Trippier: Small Firms in Bolton can benefit from a range of assistance to help them set up and expand, under national schemes such as the business expansion scheme, the loan guarantee scheme and the enterprise allowance scheme. Bolton is also eligible for regional selective assistance, as an intermediate area, and for support under the business improvement services package which I launched last November. There are no separate figures available for potential take up in Bolton. My Department's small firms service can also offer advice and counselling to people interested in setting up small businesses.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what grounds the proposed clothing, footwear and textiles scheme for technological investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries has been disallowed by the European Economic Community;

(2) if he will outline the major proposals of the clothing, footwear and textile scheme for investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries; and which of its provisions were objected to by the European Economic Community;

(3) what plans he now has for Government investment in the United Kingdom clothing, footwear and textile industries;

(4) what reasons the European Commission gave to his Department for its refusal to approve the implementation of the clothing, footwear and textiles (CLOFT) scheme for investment in the United Kingdom; if he has any alternative proposals for investment assistance in these industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *114*]: The aim of the clothing, footwear, knitting and textiles scheme, which was announced by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 19 March 1984, was to provide investment support for small firms in these industries to encourage them to invest in the most modern machinery. The proposal was to provide grants of 20 per cent. of the cost of certain high technology equipment, with a maximum grant of £40,000.

The Commission has concluded that the aid proposal did not meet the conditions necessary to benefit from any of the derogations of Article 92(3) of the Treaty of Rome and that it should not be implemented.

I have not yet seen the full text of the Commission's decision. When it becomes available, I shall wish to study the grounds on which it is based and its implications, and to consult with representatives of the industries concerned.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total amount of

Government investment in each of the following industries in the latest year for which figures are available; and what rate per 1,000 employees in each of the following industries this figure represents: *(a)* the coal mining industry, *(b)* the steel industry, *(c)* motor vehicle manufacture, *(d)* the computer manufacturing industry and *(e)* the clothing, footwear and textile industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *114*]: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The annual reports provided under the Industrial Development Act give information about support for investment on a sectoral basis, but no information is available about support for innovation on that basis. Information on nationalised industries capital requirements and financing are set out in Part V of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88". Questions relating to the coal mining industry are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the current annual levels of Government investment in the textile industries of each of the member countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *114*]: Comprehensive information on investment is not available. However, so far as sectoral aid schemes are concerned the position is as follows:

France

In April 1984 the European commission approved a textile and clothing sectoral scheme, mainly comprising a provision whereby employers were relieved of part of their social security contributions. The overall ceiling for 1984 was FF 1·2 billion.

Belgium

Commission approval was given for the first two years (viz 1982 and 1983) of a proposed five year plan to aid restructuring of the textile and clothing sector. A request to extend the scheme into 1984 was refused by the Commission.

Italy

In March 1983 the Commission approved a three-year scheme to restructure textile and clothing firms. About Lire 130 billion was made available each year in 1983 and 1984.

Netherlands

In December 1983 the Commission approved an investment support scheme for the textile and clothing sector, subsequently limited to a total of HFL 65 million.

It is my understanding that none of the above schemes is still open for applications. However, aid may be provided through regional or general schemes not specifically targetted to the textile sector.

In the United Kingdom the textile, clothing and footwear sectors received or were offered under regional assistance and general schemes £66·4 million during 1983-84 and £25·7 million during the period April to September 1984.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in yarns, fabrics and garments, respectively, in the years from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *114*]: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom trade in yarns, fabrics, garments: Crude balance (£ millions)

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984**
Yarns	8·7	60·0	−87·1	−142·7	−189·2	−220·9
Fabrics	−378·1	−216·2	−382·3	−497·6	−726·9	−836·6
Garments	−401·2	−378·1	−511·6	−597·4	−663·1	−930·0

Source:

Yarns: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Group 651 less 651·21 (wool tops).

Fabrics: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Group 652-656 plus 657. 1-657·4.

Garments: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Division 84 less Group 848 and item 847·11.

Notes:

The crude balance equals exports valued f.o.b. less imports valued c.i.f.

* Provisional figures.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many multi-fibre arrangement product categories multi-fibre arrangement suppliers increased their utilisation of their quotas to the United Kingdom by 10 per cent. or more in 1983 compared with 1982, and in 1984 compared with 1983.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *114-15*]: Quota utilisation figures for multi–fibre arrangement suppliers for 1983 cannot be readily compared with those for 1982, as the quotas were adjusted following the renegotiation of the bilateral agreements in 1982. Quota utilisation figures for 1984 are not yet available.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many times the anti-surge mechanism in the multi-fibre arrangement bilateral agreements was used in 1983 and 1984; and on how many occasions other EEC member states utilised the anti-surge mechanism in the same period.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *115*]: Neither the United Kingdom nor any other Member State of the Community made use of the anti-surge mechanism during 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which multi-fibre arrangement group I product categories, the individual quotas to the United Kingdom for Macao, Taiwan and South Korea, respectively, exceeded 1 per cent. of total United Kingdom imports of the product concerned in 1980.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *115*]: The information requested in respect of the United Kingdom is as follows:

	Categories
Macao	4, 5, 7, 8.
Taiwan	3, 4, 5, 7, 8.
South Korea	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

The anti-surge provision is applicable only when a member state's quota represents 1 per cent. (dominant suppliers) or 2·5 per cent. (non-dominant suppliers) of total EC (not United Kingdom) imports of that product in 1980.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which multi-fibre arrangement group I product categories, the quotas to the United Kingdom of the non-dominant multi-fibre arrangement suppliers exceeded 2·5 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total imports of the products concerned in 1980.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *115*]: The information requested in respect of the United Kingdom is as follows:

Category	*Countries*
1	None.
2	Brazil, China, India, Pakistan.
3	None.
4	Brazil, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Thailand.
5	Singapore, Thailand.
6	None.
7	India, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka.
8	India, Pakistan.

The anti-surge provision is applicable only when a member state's quota represents 1 per cent. (dominant suppliers) or 2·5 per cent. (non-dominant suppliers) of total EC (not United Kingdom) imports of that product in 1980.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the levels of the voluntary export restraints from Portugal and Spain to the United Kingdom of textile and clothing products for 1983 and 1984; and what were the actual levels of exports to the United Kingdom from these sources in each product category concerned in this years.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *115*]: The voluntary restraint arrangements on textile and clothing products which the EC has with Portugal and Spain are informal arrangements, the details of which are not published. Imports of products of particular concern received in the United Kingdom from those two countries in 1983 and 1984 are as follows:

Category (Units)	*1983*	*1984*
Portugal		
1 (Tonnes)	5,079	4,635
2 (Tonnes)	4,686	3,885
3 (Tonnes)	3,641	3,709
4 (Thousand pieces)	16,287	16,610
5 (Thousand pieces)	4,093	3,734
6 (Thousand pieces)	2,611	3,270
7 (Thousand pieces)	834	1,068
8 (Thousand pieces)	2,477	3,254
9 (Tonnes)	6,982	7,014
12 (Thousand pieces)	13,014	14,122
13 (Thousand pieces)	12,835	20,198
20 (Tonnes)	12,835	20,198
33 (Tonnes)	849	1,047
39 (Tonnes)	688	665
90 (Tonnes)	2,206	2,650
59.04 (Tonnes)	6,922	7,296
Spain		
1 (Tonnes)	2,919	2,789
6 (Thousand pieces)	527	499
13 (Thousand pieces)	2,876	3,137
20 (Tonnes)	470	424
22 (Tonnes)	350	299

SCOTLAND

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West on 13 February at columns *337-38*. At the request of the teachers' side my right hon. Friend met representatives of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education on 15 February. He has since had another exchange of letters with the Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side) in order to clarify still further his position on a possible review of pay and conditions of service within the SJNC(SE) framework. My right hon. Friend and I very much hope that an early decision will now be reached by the teachers' side enabling such a review to begin.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total sum of money spent by the Scottish Development Agency on promotion and marketing for the financial years 1982-83 and 1983-84; and what is the expected spending for the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The total sums spent by the Scottish Development Agency on promotion and marketing for the financial years 1982-83 and 1983-84 were £5·3 million and £7·2 million retrospectively. The agency expects to spend around £9·1 million in the financial year 1984-85.

These amounts represent expenditure, exclusive of salaries, on marketing and promotion at home and abroad, in pursuit of the full range of the agency's functions.

Regional Growth

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish regions in order of percentage growth in electorate since 1979; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figure in each case.

Mr. Ancram: The information for the Scottish regions and islands areas for the period 1979-84, is set out in the table below.

Regions and islands areas	*Actual increase*	*Percentage increase*
Grampian	27,331	7·8
Shetland	1,003	6·7
Highland	8,057	5·8
Fife	12,915	5·2
Dumfries and Galloway	5,434	5·1
Orkney	584	4·1
Central	8,286	4·1
Lothian	20,665	3·6
Western Isles	510	2·3
Borders	1,524	1·9
Tayside	5,376	1·8
Strathclyde	28,566	1·6

Dunblane Bypass

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he has not included the Dunblane bypass in the projects listed on page 45 of his Department's public expenditure to 1987-88 commentary.

Mr. Ancram: That list shows trunk road schemes which are currently expected to be ready for a start of work by 31 March 1988. The Dunblane bypass is not at present expected to be ready before the 1988-89 financial year, but I do not rule out the possibility that it might be started sooner if design and statutory procedures can be concluded quickly and if funds are available.

Fishing Industry

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts of financial assistance given by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for Scotland to the catching and processing sectors of the fishing industry in those maritime areas covered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each of the past four years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

(1) Catching Sector

	Temporary Support Schemes £'000	*Decommissioning Grants* £'000
1980-81	1,417	—
1981-82	2,555	—
1982-83	1,588	—
1983-84	8	4

(2) Processing Sector

Nil

Notes

The above figures relate to the sea fisheries districts Wick, Orkney, Shetland, Ullapool, Stornoway, Mallaig, Oban and Campbeltown.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts of financial assistance given by the Highlands and Islands Development Board to the catching and processing sectors of the fishing industry in each of the past four years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Catching*	*Processing*	*Total*
1981	2,825,935	588,852	3,414,787
1982	1,357,673	1,600,147	2,957,820
1983	3,416,698	1,762,091	5,178,789
1984	3,502,590	331,550	3,834,140
	11,102,896	4,282,640	15,385,536

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amounts of financial assistance given by the Sea Fish Industry Authority in each of the past four years to the catching and processing sectors of the fishing industry situated in those maritime areas covered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. John MacKay: Assistance provided by the authority in the Highlands and Islands Development Board area is as follows:

Catching Sector

£'000

	Payments 1981	1982	1983	1984
Grants for vessel construction	331	17	582	1,125
Grants for vessel improvements	109	95	378	336
	440	112	960	1,461

I shall write to the hon. Member with the figures for Sea Fish Industry Authority loans.

Processing Sector

No grants or loans were made.

Glenrothes Development Corporation

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which bodies were responsible for nominating the new members of the Glenrothes development corporation; and how many members of the new board reside in Glenrothes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There is no right of nomination to new town development corporations but before appointing members the Secretary of State is required to consult local authorities concerned with the development of the town. In the case of Glenrothes he consults Fife regional council and Kirkcaldy district council. Members are not appointed in any representational capacity but by virtue of the personal contribution he considers they can make to the town. Three members of Glenrothes development corporation live in Glenrothes, and the remainder elsewhere in Fife.

DEFENCE

Tricothenes (Report)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the report by scientists from his Department's Porton Down laboratories of their visit over three years ago to south-east Asia to study the consequences of tricothenes has not yet been published; and when it is proposed that it will be published.

Mr. Lee: No scientists from the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, have visited south-east Asia for this purpose. Investigations into the alleged use of mycotoxins on south-east Asia are continuing, but we are not yet in a position to state when their results might be made available.

Binary Nerve Gas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an undertaking that Her Majesty's Government will not be willing to manufacture in the United Kingdom precursors for binary nerve gas.

Mr. Lee: Such chemicals are widely used for normal and bona fide industrial purposes such as flame retardants and pesticides. On the manufacture of all types of chemical weapons, Her Majesty's Government's position remains as set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at column 901.

Nuclear Security

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all police forces, quasi police forces and security agencies which operate in respect of military nuclear matters.

Mr. Lee: Ministry of Defence police, who have constabulary powers under the 1923 Special Constables Act, and RAF police, who carry out their duties under military law, have responsibility for protecting military nuclear assets.

Arms Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of United Kingdom arms sales overseas in 1984; and what were the values in 1970, 1974 and 1979 expressed in constant prices.

Mr. Lee: The latest year for which detailed information is available is 1983. Figures for 1970 and 1974 exclude "estimates of additional military equipment" which have only been recorded since 1975. On this basis, details given at 1983 constant prices are as follows:

Year	*Identified Defence Equipment** £ million	*Estimates of Additional Military Equipment†* £ million
1970	306	Not available
1974	564	Not available
1975	492	693
1979	551	957
1983	919	1189

Notes:

* Categories of equipment which can be identified through the Customs and Excise tariff.

† These goods are not distinguishable from similar goods for civilian purposes in Customs and Excise records. These estimates are based on information from the Society of British Aerospace Companies and individual electronics and motor vehicle manufacturing companies. Exports connected with international collaborative projects are excluded.

BAOR (Nursery Education)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of pre-school children in British Army of the Rhine families living in Germany and the support and educational services provided for them.

Mr. Lee: As at the end of January this year there were 16,612 pre-school children in British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) families living in Germany.

The support and educational facilities available for the under-fives in BAOR are similar to those provided in the United Kingdom for children of the same age. Kindergartens, mother and toddler groups, and playgroups have been established over a number of years and are well supported.

In addition, the medical services provided are comprehensive and include child guidance clinics, paediatricians, SSAFA health visitors, speech therapists, and there are some limited facilities for handicapped children.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of his Department's police are currently involved in security operations at RAF Molesworth;

(2) what assistance he has requested from civilian police forces to assist in security operations at RAF Molesworth;

(3) how many Army and Royal Air Force personnel are currently assigned to the security operation at RAF Molesworth;

(4) what is the current rate of expenditure per week on the security operations at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated final cost of the perimeter fence at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley: The cost of the permanent single weldmesh fence and related ancillary works now under construction at RAF Molesworth is estimated at approximately £3·5 million.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current estimate of the total cost of preparing RAF Molesworth up to the arrival of cruise missiles.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) on 22 November 1984 at column *224*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage of earnings absorbed by income tax and employee's social security contributions at different levels of earnings in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the United States of America and Japan, respectively *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1984.

Mr. Moore: The information requested, for selected levels of income and family responsibilities, is as follows:

Percentage of earnings absorbed by income tax and social security contributions

		United Kingdom	*France*	*Germany*	*USA*	*Japan*
Single Person						
1979	£1,500	12	10	16	6 (6)	8 (8)
1984	£1,500	0	13	17·5	7 (7)	10(10)
1979	£3,000	24	14	23	14(14)	11(13)
1984	£3,000	19	13	23	7(7)	10(10)

		United Kingdom	France	Germany	USA	Japa
1979	£5,000	29	19	29	18(20)	12(15
1984	£5,000	27	15	28	11(12)	13(14
1979	£9,000	31	24	37	25(29)	15(20
1984	£9,000	32	23	34	16(17)	15(17
1979	£12,000	31	27	36	28(34)	15(21
1984	£12,000	34	26	39	18(20)	16(19
1979	£16,000	34	29	40	31(38)	17(23
1984	£16,000	34	29	39	20(23)	17(22
1979	£20,000	37	32	42	33(41)	18(26
1984	£20,000	34	31	42	24(28)	17(23
1979	£30,000	44	36	46	3[illegible]6)	24(33
1984	£30,000	38·5	35	46	28(34)	19(26
1979	£50,000	50	41	50	40(50)	31(42
1984	£50,000	46	42	50	31(40)	24(34
Married couple						
1979	£1,500	6·5	10	16	6 (6)	8 (8
1984	£1,500	0	13	17·5	7 (7)	10(10
1979	£3,000	17	10	16	8 (8)	9(10
1984	£3,000	9	13	17·5	7 (7)	10(10
1979	£5,000	25	14	23	14(14)	11(13
1984	£5,000	20	14	23	7 (7)	11(11
1979	£9,000	29	17	28	19(20)	14(18
1984	£9,000	28	18	28	12(12)	13(15
1979	£12,000	29	19	25	22(24)	14(20
1984	£12,000	31	19	30	14(15)	14(17
1979	£16,000	32	22	27	25(28)	15(22
1984	£16,000	31	20	28	16(17)	16(20
1979	£20,000	36	24	29	28(33)	17(25
1984	£20,000	32	23	30	18(20)	16(21
1979	£30,000	42	28	35	33(40)	22(32
1984	£30,000	37	28	34	22(25)	18(25
1979	£50,000	49	35	42	38(46)	31(42
1984	£50,000	44·5	32	41	27(33)	23(33
Married couple with two dependent children						
1979	£1,500	0	0	0	6 (6)	8 (8
1984	£1,500	0	0	1	7 (7)	10(10
1979	£3,000	3	1	2	6 (6)	8 (8
1984	£3,000	0	0	1	7 (7)	10(10
1979	£5,000	17	5	14	10(10)	8 (9
1984	£5,000	6	2	11	7(7)	10(10
1979	£9,000	24	10	23	17(18)	12(15
1984	£9,000	21	9	21	10(10)	10(11
1979	£12,000	26	12	21	20(22)	12(16
1984	£12,000	25	11	26	12(12)	12(14
1979	£16,000	30	15	24	22(26)	14(20
1984	£16,000	27	13	23	14(15)	14(16
1979	£20,000	34	18	27	26(31)	15(22
1984	£20,000	28	15	26	16(18)	14(18
1979	£30,000	41	22	33	32(39)	21(30
1984	£30,000	34	22	31	21(23)	16(22
1979	£50,000	49	29	41	37(46)	29(40
1984	£50,000	43	27	39	26(31)	22(31

Notes:

1. The figures shown relate to income of 1984 and 1979 (1984-85 and 1979-80 in the case of the United Kingdom).
2. Coversions were made for 1984 at the exchange rates prevailing on 4 February 1985 and for 1979 at the average exchange rates for 1979. They do not fully reflect differences in purchasing power between sterling and the other currencies.
3. In addition to personal allowances, the tables take into account employment income reliefs and other standard reliefs (including income tax relief for social security contributions given in certain of the countries).
4. The income of the married couple is assumed to be wholly income of the husband.
5. The percentages given for a married couple with two dependent children reflect the tax and social security contributions due *less* any child benefit payable in respect of the children.
6. It is assumed that the United Kingdom employee is contracted-in to the State pension scheme.
7. The figures in brackets for the USA and Japan include local income taxes at typical rates.

Company Taxation

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide a motive test in section 29 of the Finance Act 1973.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to exempt the payment of intra-group dividends by close groups of companies from the provisions relating to apportionment.

Mr. Moore: Existing rules already provide that to the extent that retention of intra-group dividends is necessary for the business requirements of members of trading groups there will be no apportionment.

Employees (Company Shares)

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend section 79 of the Finance Act 1972 in relation to the acquisition by employees of shares in subsidiary companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation whereby employers offering approved share option provisions may have the right to buy back employees' shares when their employment comes to an end.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Furniss *v.* Dawson

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he proposes any legislative changes following the decision of the House of Lords in Furniss *v.* Dawson.

Mr. Moore: I have no plan to propose such changes, but the position will be kept under review.

Average Earnings

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of average earnings is represented by *(a)* the single person's tax allowance and *(b)* the married man's tax allowance at the current time; and how that percentage compares with those for the following years: 1960, 1970, 1975, 1979, 1980 and 1983, respectively.

Mr. Moore: The tax threshold for earned income, expressed as a percentage of average male manual earnings, is as follows:

	Single	*Married*
1960-61	29·5	42·6
1970-71	28·7	41·0
1975-76	21·5	30·4
1979-80	22·2	34·5
1980-81	22·5	35·1
1983-84	23·4	36·6
*1984-85	24·7	38·9

* Assuming an increase in earnings of 7½ per cent. between 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Per-capita Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what figure per capita of the tax-paying population was represented by the total grant-aid received by the United Kingdom from the European Economic Community in each of the years since such grants commenced.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what figure per capita of the tax-paying population was represented by the financial contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the years since such contributions commenced.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

European Community Budget

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the proportion of the EEC budget for each year since 1972, devoted to *(a)* compulsory and *(b)* non-compulsory expenditure; and what are the current guidelines in force as to the possible annual increase in expenditure in both categories.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Departments (Staff)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff-in-post in central Government Departments at 1 January.

Mr. Peter Rees: At 1 January 1985 there were 619,570 staff-in-post — 503,253 non-industrial and 116,317 industrial. The number of civil servants has fallen by 112,705 or 15·4 per cent. since the beginning of the last Parliament.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Ministers (Voting)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government have accepted the principle of a more frequent use of majority voting in the EEC Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government consider that British interests would be well served if votes were more regularly taken in respect of those treaty articles which provide for majority voting, with the important proviso that it should remain open to any member state to postpone a vote indefinitely where very important national interests are at stake.

Draft Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what explanation the European Assembly advanced to the Council of Ministers for its rejection of the draft 1985 budget; and if this draft budget had the approval of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Parliament rejected the draft 1985 budget as agreed by the Council on the grounds that it did not cover twelve months of revenue and expenditure. The Council, in forwarding the draft budget to the European Parliament, undertook to meet additional budgetary requirements by 1 October 1985.

Law of the Sea Convention

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Nations convention on the law of the sea will enter into force; and what are the implications for the United Kingdom's interests in deep sea mining and other areas covered by the convention which flow from its implementation, although the United Kingdom is not a signatory.

Mr. Rifkind: The convention will enter into force one year after sixty ratifications and accessions in respect of states ratifying or acceding to it. So far, there have been 14 ratifications. In respect of states ratifying or acceding subsequently, it enters into force 30 days after the deposit of the instrument of accession by the state in question. The United Kingdom, as a state which has not acceded to the convention, would become bound by the rules envisaged in the convention only in so far as they were generally accepted and regarded as rules of customary international law. How far they are or may come to be so regarded depends on the past and future state practice of countries generally. As for deep sea mining, British operators have made it clear they would not wish to operate under the convention's present mining regime.

Romania and Bulgaria

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had on his recent visits to Romania and Bulgaria on the subject of trade with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: Trade forms a significant part of our bilateral relationship with both Romania and Bulgaria. During my right hon. and learned Friend's recent talks with the Romanian President and Foreign Minister they agreed on the desirability of expanding and diversifying bilateral trade. They discussed current collaborative projects and possible areas for future cooperation. They also discussed prospects for the forthcoming meeting in London of the United Kingdom/Romania Joint Commission. In Sofia, where my right hon. and learned Friend had talks with President Zhivkov, and the Bulgarian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, he discussed trade opportunities and areas of potential industrial collaboration where United Kingdom firms are particularly well-placed to make a contribution. My right hon. and learned Friend's visit there took place immediately before the opening of a British Economic Week. The United Kingdom/Bulgaria Joint Commission next meets in London in March and the Bulgarian Foreign Trade Minister will visit Britain in April, returning a visit made to Bulgaria last summer by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade.

COCOM Committee

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the work load arising from the COCOM committee, he has any plans to increase the level of staff for trade purposes at the British embassy in Moscow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The multilateral forum for the discussion of export control policy matters (COCOM) is based in Paris and the work arising from it is dealt with by staff there, in London and in the capitals of other member states. There are no plans for increasing the staff in the places concerned. COCOM has made no decisions which would necessitate increasing the number of staff engaged in commercial work in Moscow.

British Council

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount given by the Government to the British Council in 1969, 1974, 1979 and 1984; and how this has changed in real terms.

Mr. Renton: Money received by the British Council from the Government in the relevant years, excluding agency money, was as follows:

	£ million
1968-69	11·3
1974-75	25·3
1978-79	45·9
1983-84	73·4

From 1968-69 to 1983-84 this represents a 25 per cent. increase in real terms calculated by using the GDP deflator, or a 2 per cent. decrease on the basis of risen costs at home and overseas and of exchange rate movements.

Ethiopia

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protests were made by Her Majesty's Government, in concert with other Governments and international organisations, against the delay of several days to aircraft carrying food to relieve

the famine in Ethiopia by flights concerned with the Organisation of African Unity summit meeting at Addis Ababa; and what was the result of such protests.

Mr. Rifkind: The Ethiopian Government did warn us last November that pressure of aircraft at Addis Ababa airport before and during the OAU conference might cause difficulties. In the event, however, there were no delays of which we are aware.

Integrated Mediterranean Programmes

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the effect of the proposed increase in EEC funds for the integrated Mediterranean programmes on *(a)* the size of the European regional development fund, *(b)* the proportions of the European regional development fund devoted to quota and non-quota sections, *(c)* the quota allocation to the United Kingdom and *(d)* the availability of European regional development funds for projects in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission's new proposals for integrated Mediterranean programmes have only just been tabled and have not yet been discussed. The effect of the proposals on the European regional development fund is one of the points we shall wish to ascertain.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the last year the percentage increase in war pensioners' mobility allowance as against the percentage increase in the cost of motoring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: War pensioners' mobility supplement was increased from 26 November 1984 by 5·2 per cent.

The transport and vehicle group index, that part of the retail prices index which covers motoring costs, petrol and oil, motor insurance, fares and rail transport, for the year ended November 1984 showed an increase of 2·1 per cent.

AIDS

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the first case of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the United Kingdom came to the attention of the Department; and what action was then taken.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The first case was reported to our Department in December 1981. Arrangements were made immediately for the surveillance of AIDS cases to be undertaken by the communicable disease surveillance centre. In July 1983, with our support and participation, the Medical Research Council set up a working party to review scientific knowledge and research on AIDS worldwide, to encourage contact and co-operation between research workers in the field, and to advise the Council on the current state of knowledge and on topics for research. In August 1983 we issued a leaflet asking those who believed they were in the high risk groups for AIDS not to give blood. With regard to other action taken, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) on 20 February, at columns *497-500*.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will set out in tabular form the number of diagnosed cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the most recent 12-month period, indicating how many, and what percentage, involved *(a)* practising homosexuals, *(b)* persons injecting themselves with drugs and *(c)* other causes which he is able to specify or identify.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information for 1984 is as follows:

	No.	*Percentage of total*
Practising homosexuals/bisexuals	70	90·9
Intravenous drug abusers	—	—
Haemophiliacs	1	1·3
Persons connected with Central Africa	5	6·5
Others/unknown	1	1·3
Total	77	100·0

War Pensioners (Psychiatric Cases)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of war pension cases awarded in 1982, 1983 and to the latest available date in 1984 acknowledged the primary disability condition as being of a psychiatric nature.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Year	*Percentage*
1982	5·1
1983	4·7
*1984	4·6

* Up to September.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider introducing independent multi-disciplinary panels, including a psychiatrist, social worker or other professional with experience of mental health problems, for assessing severe disablement allowance claims by mentally ill or handicapped persons.

Mr. Newton: No. The level of disablement for severe disablement allowance is assessed by the adjudicating medical authorities in accordance with criteria similar to those already used in the industrial injuries and war pensions schemes. These authorities will aim to build up a complete picture of the claimant's condition, based on statements provided by him and those who care for him and, where necessary, information from other sources, including doctors' reports and hospital case-notes.

Most mental handicap is present from birth or the early development years and people so affected can normally expect to qualify for severe disablement allowance before age 20 on a test of incapacity for work alone.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific steps he is taking to ensure that adjudicating medical practitioners deciding severe disablement allowance claims receive thorough instruction in assessing disabilities as well as periodic refresher courses.

Mr. Newton: Adjudicating medical practitioners already have long experience of assessing a wide range of

disabilities on claims arising in the industrial injuries and war pensions schemes. Specific guidance on severe disablement allowance has been made available to them in the form of a draft handbook. This is currently being revised in the light of the many helpful comments received from voluntary organisations representing disabled people and will eventually be published. Adjudicating medical practitioners dealing with claims for the new benefit have also received guidance, either in groups at specially arranged sessions, or by acting as a member of a medical board chaired by a colleague from our full-time medical staff. The need for further guidance will be kept under close review.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of pensioners living in Welwyn Hatfield constituency who are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: The Welwyn Hatfield constituency is covered by two DHSS offices. The number of pensioners receiving supplementary benefit from these offices in February 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, was

Hertford	4227
St. Albans	3126

Human Embryos

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the source of medical evidence which states that 60 per cent. of human embryos do not implant in the womb, as given by the Minister of State on 15 February, *Official Report*, column 685.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Two widely quoted scientific sources which refer to an implantation failure rate in the region of 60 per cent. are:

Roberts, C. J., Lowe, C. R., *Lancet* 1975, *vol. 1*, pp 498-499.
Lindley, M., *Nature* 1979, *vol. 280*, pp 635-636.

I did describe the figure as a modest estimate.

Miss Janet Palfrey

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the reasons why Miss Janet Palfrey of 47 Churchill road, Walton, Stone, Staffordshire, has not received supplementary benefit from 3 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Miss Palfrey's claim has been assessed and she has been notified that she is not entitled to any supplementary benefit in her present circumstances. I understand my hon. Friend has written to Stafford local office about her case and that a reply was sent on 26 February.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him about the period after which patients with end-stage renal failure die; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There is no precise definition of the point of onset of end-stage renal failure and it is not therefore possible to measure the period from that point until death.

Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of St[a]te for Social Services if he will list the social security be[n]efits for disabled people and their carers which spon[sored] immigrants and their carers may *(a)* claim and *(b)* claim.

Mr. Newton: Disabled sponsored immigrants claim benefits for disabled people subject to the same as other claimants. These rules include tests of pre in Great Britain as follows: for attendance allowanc weeks out of 52 preceding claim; for mobility allow 52 weeks out of 18 months preceding claim; for s disablement allowance, 168 of 196 qualifying da incapacity. In each case the claimant also has to be p in Great Britain at the time the claim is to be made. are also tests of ordinary residence and for s disablement allowance the claimant must also have resident 10 out of 20 years preceding the claim (under 20, at least 10 years since birth).

The carer of a disabled sponsored immigrant may invalid care allowance subject to the same rules a other carer.

Both disabled sponsored immigrants and their c may claim supplementary benefit subject to the same as other disabled people and their carers. However, i case of any sponsored immigrant, whether or not disa the sponsor is liable for the immigrant's maintenanc any supplementary benefit paid to the immigrant m recoverable from the sponsor.

A sponsored immigrant who has been resident in Britain for 10 years after age 60 may qualify for a contributory retirement pension at age 80 or on compl of the residence test if later.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of Stat Social Services what would be the cost of transferri current recipients of unemployability supplemen invalidity benefit and of abolishing unemployal supplement; if there are any circumstances in the futu which a person could under present legislation be entitled to unemployability supplement and no invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper "Reform of Industrial Injuries Scheme" (Cmnd. 8402) envisage abolition of unemployability supplement, with exi beneficiaries being transferred to invalidity benefit. cost would be minimal.

There are two, albeit rare, circumstances in w unemployability supplement would be payable invalidity benefit would not. Firstly, invalidity be cannot be paid after deemed retirement age (70 for and 65 for women), whereas unemployability supple continues in payment irrespective of age. Seco earnings greater than £23·50 in one week would re entitlement to invalidity benefit for that week, but w not affect unemployability supplement provided ear for the year were not above £1,222.

Incontinence Pads

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of Stat Social Services if he will advise health authorities r reduce the supply of incontinence pads to paren

children incontinent by reason of physical or mental disability without first undertaking an individual assessment of need.

Mr. John Patten: We would expect such an assessment to be made before reducing the supply of incontinence pads, but it is a matter for health authorities to decide locally.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for invalidity benefit to be paid in advance rather than in arrears where there is underlying entitlement to widow's pension or any other overlapping benefit listed in regulation 16 of the Claims and Payments Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No. Invalidity benefit is generally paid in arrears because title is dependent on the provision of medical evidence for the period covered. A widow who is entitled to both widow's pension and invalidity benefit can choose which benefit she wishes to receive. Normally widow's pension is paid in full because it is the greater of the two. If there is any balance of invalidity benefit due, this is paid separately. The only other benefit listed in regulation 16 which overlaps with invalidity benefit is invalid care allowance which, like widow's pension, is paid in advance.

Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what regulations apply to overlap of a national insurance widow's pension and any pensions received from another country in respect of a widow's late husband's previous employment abroad.

Mr. Whitney: There are provisions in some reciprocal agreements made between the United Kingdom and other countries which enable a widow's pension awarded under the Social Security Acts to be reduced by reference to a widow's pension which is paid by the other country concerned and is based wholly or partly on the widow's late husband's record in that country.

Central Funding Initiative

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will approve the Shropshire health authority's application under the central funding initiative to establish a self-referral walk-in counselling service in Shropshire.

Mr. John Patten: I am glad to say that the application was approved on 21 February.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the aggregate effect on the sales to the National Health Service of pharmaceutical companies with establishments within the Welwyn Hatfield constituency of his revised limited list proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We cannot estimate this with precision. It depends on a number of factors, including whether the companies concerned decide to supply generic medicines to the National Health Service.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the exact nature of the consultations he is having with retail pharmacists over their current stockholding of drugs which will no longer be available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *142*]: Since my right hon. Friend's announcement last November there has been ample time for retail pharmacists to adjust the stocks they hold of drugs no longer available on the National Health Service. However as my right hon. Friend said in his statement to the House on 21 February we are prepared to examine any relevant evidence that pharmacists may present on this matter.

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the termination of all routine admissions to the Royal Liverpool hospital.

Mr. John Patten: Routine admissions have been suspended temporarily at the Royal Liverpool hospital due to the unusually high incidence of emergency admissions resulting from the recent weather conditions. No urgent admissions are affected. It is for health authorities to arrange admissions to hospitals to take account of fluctuations in demand.

Maternity Services Liaison Committees

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those district and regional health authorities which have so far not appointed non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees;

(2) what steps he intends to take to ensure that district health authorities appoint non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees;

(3) if he will set a deadline by which time district health authorities must have appointed non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Efficiency Incentive Payments

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what was the total value of efficiency incentive payments made to offices in his Department in 1984; if he will list the categories of savings which qualified for such incentives; and if he will list the offices to which such payments were awarded, showing the amount of the payment and the use to which it was put in each office under the following categories; office parties, staff outings and social purposes, purchases of equipment, purchases of vouchers for use by staff and donations to charities.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 January 1985, c. *219-21*]: I regret that the list of offices receiving incentive awards given in my previous reply was incomplete. The following offices have also received incentive awards.

	£
North East Region	
Ashington	226·25
Berwick	19·08
Blyth	70·87
Durham	60·32
Hexham	637·75
Jarrow AO	23·25
Jarrow NIO	16·70
Newcastle (St. Jones)	187·76
Newcastle (East)	1,164·47
Newcastle (West)	129·32
South Shields	33·90
Stanley	207·27
Sunderland (North)	21·95
Sunderland (South)	30·52
Wallsend	21·97
North West Region	
Liverpool City	152·00
Scotland	
Glasgow Bridgeton	206·00
Bathgate	1,000·00

The revised total of awards made is £32,282·74.

Unemployment Benefit (Seasonal Wo

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of Employment how many persons in each of years have appealed against having unemploy refused to them on the basis that they are d seasonal workers.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 Ja c. *93*]: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested, which is av from 1980 is as follows:

Year	*No. appeals hear*
1980	28
1981	22
1982	26
1983	28

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 February 1985

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Lecturers (Redundancies)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of university lectureship redundancies in each of the last four academic years.

Mr. Brooke: The number of academic staff taking early retirement under the UGC's redundancy compensation scheme in the academic years 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84 were 1,446, 864 and 890 respectively. Information for 1984-85 is not yet available.

School Bus Passes

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans his Department has to issue fresh advice to county councils concerning the provision of concessionary school bus passes in the light of the High Court decision in the case of Rogers *v.* Essex County Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend understands that this case may be the subject of an appeal. In the first instance it is for local education authorities to consider the implications of the judgment, but my right hon. Friend will of course also be considering it.

EMPLOYMENT

Fairgrounds

83. **Mr. Nelson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he is arranging between local authorities, the Health and Safety Executive and fairground operators about measures to improve the safety of fairground equipment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultation with the fairground industry on measures to improve the safety of fairground equipment takes place at the joint advisory committee for health and safety in the amusement industry. Membership of this committee consists of representatives from the Health and Safety Executive national industry group and the three main organisations which represent fairground operators.

The work of the committee has led to the joint initiative of the publication in 1984 of the code of safe practice at fairs and there are indications that this has already led to improved standards. A sub-committee of the advisory committee is considering how the code's objectives can be translated into improvements at particular devices. The executive has published advice on improvements at popular fairground rides, and a programme of further guidance notes has been drawn up.

Youth Training Scheme and Community Programm

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State f Employment whether he will instruct the Manpow Services Commission to permit disclosure of informati regarding accidents on the youth training scheme a community programme to area manpower boards and ho Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Subject to requirements confidentiality concerning individuals, information accidents to trainees on the youth training scheme w continue to be made available to area manpower boar and hon. Members.

Sponsors of community programme projects are t employers of all participants and are responsible f notifying accident information to statutory enforci authorities in accordance with legal requirements. T Manpower Services Commission does not colle statistical information on accidents for the communi programme, although area manpower boards will contin to be advised on health and safety concerns abo individual project applications.

Community Programme

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State f Employment if he will make a statement on the allocati of places on the community programme in Basildon.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Basildon area currently h more places on the community programme in proporti to the incidence of long-term unemployment than mo other areas in the south-east. At the end of January 198 the latest date for which figures are available, it had 3 filled places.

Adult Training Strategy

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State f Employment if he will make a statement on the adu training strategy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government's adult traini strategy encompasses a number of initiatives to stimula adult training.

The national adult training campaign, launched November with the aim of raising awareness about t importance of adult training, is now under way. Action support of the campaign is being developed at bo national and local level.

The commission is working jointly with the Educati Departments to promote effective collaboration and acti on training at local level. Encouraging progress is bei made and 116 individual projects have been approved date. We are developing new methods of deliveri training by extending best practice in the use of op learning, supporting the development of new traini technologies and encouraging work on the training nee of trainers.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State f Employment what information he has as to the avera length of time unemployed people are without a job sin they became unemployed; and what evidence he has as the correlation between this average figure and the over level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about median durations of unemployment, both in terms of uncompleted spells and completed spells is published quarterly in tables 2·22 and 2·24 of the Employment Gazette. Precise evidence on the correlation between these figures and the overall level of unemployment is not available, but these figures tend to increase when unemployment is rising.

Early Retirement (Job Creation)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to create new job opportunities by increasing the opportunity for early retirement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend announced in the House on 12 November 1984, at column 444, that the full-time job release scheme, due to end on 31 March 1985, would continue until 31 March 1986, and that we would be revising the present part-time job release scheme to make it more attractive to both employers and employees.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given, in conjuction with other EEC Employment Ministers, to European Commission document 9248/84, on action to combat long-term unemployment in the Community; what steps they intend to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) on 21 December 1984, at columns 387-88. As the final text of the resolution on action to combat long-term unemployment recognises, the problem cannot be resolved without policies designed to achieve economic recovery, and the Government will continue to pursue such policies.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive inspectors are employed in Scotland; and what was the number in 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 1 February 1985 there were 90 Health and Safety Executive inspectors employed in Scotland. On 1 February 1979 the number was 108.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he is considering for removing any obligations as respects health and safety from employers in small companies in Scotland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no such proposals currently before him from the Health and Safety Commission, which advises him on such matters. However, the Government are committed to taking all practicable steps to encourage enterprise and initiative, and we are always ready to consider proposals which can help small businesses while being compatible with the maintenance of health and safety standards at work.

Youth Opportunities Programme

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the final report of the independent study on accidents to trainees on the youth op programme, commissioned by the Manpow Commission, has been completed; and what findings.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In their preliminary r on an analysis of a 10 per cent. sample of a trainees on the youth opportunities programm April 1980 and March 1983, researchers f university suggested an examination of a large ensure that their findings were soundly bas provide more detailed analyses of the p occurrence, severity and causation of accident report based on a larger sample has now been r I have placed a copy in the Library. The la generally confirms the findings containe preliminary report which was placed in the Libr 1984. The Aston researchers conclude that evidence that trainees on the youth op programme had a higher accident incidence employed young persons. They express stron tions on the validity of comparing accident inci for the youth opportunities programme with fi the Health and Safety Executive applying to the population generally. The great majority sustained by trainees were of the type that expected to happen to any person working in the concerned. Copies of the Aston reports are av request from the Manpower Services Commis

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of Employment if he will place in the Library Manpower Services Commission memorandu with accidents on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his* February 1985, c. *18*]: Yes. I am placing in t today a copy of the Manpower Services Com memorandum to its local staff on the dis information on accidents to area manpower boa be seen from the memorandum that area manpo receive regular monitoring reports on health an the youth training scheme and are given infor individual accidents. Details identifying providers or trainees are not normally given as civil proceedings may be taken in connectio accident and it is necessary to safeguard a actions or statements which might prejudice pr Information and statistics on accidents to train youth training scheme have always been made to this House, and this will continue.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conveyancing

Mr. Gorst asked the Attorney-General introduce legislation to ensure that banks societies or any other organisations likely to conveyancing work are excluded from doing circumstances in which a conflict of interests r as a result of working for both the vendo purchaser.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to previous statements on this topic. No legislation is contemplated during the present Session of Parliament.

ENERGY

Nuclear Security

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all police forces, quasi police forces or security agencies which operate in respect of civil nuclear matters.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary, which was established by statute, protects United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels establishements and nuclear materials in transit. I understand that BNFL and the CEGB employ commercial security firms at some sites. This is a matter for them.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy how Britain compares with other countries in energy efficiency; what was the position in each of the last 10 years; and on what statistical data he bases his conclusion.

Mr. David Hunt: In making comparisons of Britain's performance on improving its energy efficiency, my Department has drawn on the statistics prepared by the OECD and the International Energy Agency. Figures covering the 10 years 1973-83, for the UK and its chief industrial and economic competitors, are as follows:

*Ratios of Total Final Energy Consumption per Unit of GDP**					*Average Annual Rate of Change*
	1973	*1979*	*1982*	*1983*	*Per cent.*
Japan	·50	·46	·35	·35	−3·6
United States	·85	·78	·69	·66	−2·5
France†	·43	·37	·32	·32	−3·0
Germany	·49	·43	·37	·37	−2·8
Netherlands	·59	·61	·46	·47	−2·3
United Kingdom	·65	·59	·53	·51	−2·3

* Measured in tons oil equivalent per 1,000 dollars of GDP at 1975 prices and exchange rates.
† France is not a member of the IEA; figures may not be directly comparable.

PRIME MINISTER

Women's Hospitals

Q32. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Prime Minister what reply she has sent to the letter from Dr. Jean Lawrie about keeping open the South London Hospital for Women and the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital sent to her on 11 February.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Health and Social Security has sent a reply to Dr. Lawrie on my behalf.

Down Thomas

Q97. **Mr. Steen** asked the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Down Thomas.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Ayot St. Peter

Q113. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if sh will pay a visit to the parish of Ayot St. Peter.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to d so.

Privatisation

Q118. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Prime Ministe if she will make a statement on progress of th Government's privatisation programme.

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 privatisation ha freed 12 major companies and a number of othe enterprises from state control. Over 400,000 employee have been transferred to the private sector. On averag around 80 per cent. of eligible employees have taken u shares and now own a stake in the business in which the work. Our measures to encourage the small investor to bu shares have probably doubled the number of shareholder in the United Kingdom. The common pattern fo privatised companies has been improved turnover an higher profits, enabling them to increase investment an create more jobs. We shall continue to sustain th momentum of the privatisation programme and spread it many benefits as widely as possible.

Security Surveillance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whethe the Government will seek to establish an all-part committee of privy councillors to scutinise all application for surveillance where it is alleged that the persons o organisations whose right to privacy is to be secretl curtailed constitute a threat the Parliamentary democrac by seeking to undermine it by political, industrial o violent means.

The Prime Minister: No. I do not believe that ther is any reason to depart from the principle of ministeria accountability for national security matters. As far a investigations into subversive activities are concerned, am satisfied that these are carried out with proper regar for the definition of such activities first given by Lor Harris of Greenwich:

"those which threaten the safety or well-being of the State an which are intended to undermine or overthrow Parliamentar democracy by political, industrial or violent means"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 February 1975; Vol. 357, c. 947.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what i the definition of a Communist sympathiser for th purposes of surveillance by the security services.

The Prime Minister: A Communist sympathiser i commonly understood to be a person who, whilst no himself a Communist, supports the aims and intentions o communism. Under the terms of its directive, the Securit Service has a duty to investigate the activities of suc people where there is a threat to the defence of the realm as a whole from attempts at espionage and sabotage, o from actions of persons and organisations (whethe directed from within or without the country) which ma be judged subversive of the state.

European Council

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister if she will see to ensure that the agenda for meetings of the Europea

Council distinguishes between items which come within the scope of the European Economic Community treaties and those which do not.

The Prime Minister: The function of the European Council is to provide strategic direction and political impetus for all areas of European Community work and for co-operation between member states outside the treaty framework; for example, in political co-operation. No purpose is therefore served in distinguishing between matters discussed on the basis of whether or not they fall within the scope of the treaties.

Engagements

Mr. Colvin asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 February.

Mr. Eggar asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 February.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I will be having further meetings later today.

Surrogate Motherhood

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received on the legal implications for children born by commercial surrogate motherhood; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 14 January, at column 63.

ENVIRONMENT

Crime Prevention

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority crime prevention schemes are currently funded through the urban aid programme.

Sir George Young: In 1984-85 the urban programme is funding some 300 projects promoted by local authorities which are intended to prevent crime, or alleviate its effects. The total value of these projects is approximately £6·3 million. Local authorities operate about 40 per cent. of these projects directly; the rest are run by voluntary organisations.

Empty Dwellings (Greater London)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have taken place in the number of empty dwellings in Greater London and in each of its component boroughs and the City in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector in each of the last six years up to the latest date for which information is available.

Sir George Young: The available information is from housing authorities' annual housing investment programme returns, which, except for their own dwelling stock, are based on such evidence as they can gather. Figures for consecutive years may not be comparable because they are not on a common basis, so that apparent changes must be interpreted with caution, not only for the private sector but for the public sector, which includes, as well as council houses, some dwellings owned by other public authorities and by housing associations.

The figures reported by the authorities for each year from 1978 and the increases or decreases each year are given in the following table, with estimates for Greater London which include allowances for missing figures.

Table 1

Vacant dwellings in Greater London by borough 1978 to 1984 at 1 April in each year

	Private Sector							Public Sector					
	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Greater London Council	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,000	†	†	†5,460	†1,535	†1,299	1,852
City of London	0	0	*	*	*	*	0	1	0	9	119	184	†93	0
Barking & Dagenham	254	280	121	214	*	*	*	538	1,078	554	558	†800	†708	†529
Barnet	1,531	1,637	3,108	3,126	3,147	2,522	2,400	423	903	721	606	620	630	621
Bexley	796	1,460	1,523	1,497	1,512	1,807	1,829	†220	†340	272	318	315	298	346
Brent	2,800	2,800	3,100	3,100	3,586	2,924	3,053	1,700	1,750	1,600	1,152	1,002	1,054	1,175
Bromley	3,468	3,392	3,042	3,000	3,731	3,338	3,245	322	508	438	†335	†236	†391	†287
Camden	4,170	4,133	4,160	4,167	3,848	4,354	4,641	3,680	2,635	2,423	2,286	†1,308	1,390	1,359

	Private Sector							Public Sector						
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Croydon	2,900	2,900	3,100	3,100	2,839	2,542	3,228	370	290	360	362	431	456	422
Ealing	1,582	1,489	2,331	2,272	2,111	2,100	2,195	670	758	943	1,013	858	784	735
Enfield	*	*	*	*	3,149	2,900	2,179	†382	†605	†454	†381	†345	†497	†613
Greenwich	1,500	1,539	1,686	1,386	1,140	2,206	2,126	1,158	1,331	964	1,286	1,550	1,227	1,321
Hackney	1,600	1,750	2,450	2,870	2,780	1,980	2,553	3,147	3,750	4,200	4,880	4,890	3,899	3,577
Hammersmith & Fulham	2,770	4,147	3,441	3,767	4,774	4,794	4,862	†1,483	1,602	2,209	1,873	1,765	1,578	1,419
Haringey	2,370	1,935	1,121	1,530	2,422	2,962	3,310	2,076	2,358	2,479	2,110	1,238	1,133	1,153
Harrow	970	1,220	1,328	1,832	1,540	1,687	1,382	170	183	126	120	145	168	195
Havering	1,300	1,400	1,538	1,584	1,590	1,608	1,628	410	510	326	449	453	504	438
Hillingdon	1,510	940	1,200	1,215	1,220	1,241	1,270	710	1,171	671	955	778	594	465
Hounslow	1,580	2,137	2,125	1,474	3,322	2,197	2,627	123	796	846	526	678	533	341
Islington	1,856	1,824	5,100	5,647	5,092	5,275	3,200	3,810	4,793	3,836	3,289	2,908	2,725	2,764
Kensington & Chelsea	3,147	2,813	5,952	6,000	8,080	8,080	8,080	2,253	2,387	†570	1,480	1,619	1,277	1,121
Kingston upon Thames	900	1,270	1,276	1,071	1,051	1,497	1,393	206	†128	156	144	167	164	201
Lambeth	2,150	2,170	2,700	2,700	3,990	3,610	3,610	4,850	4,630	†3,140	3,200	2,640	2,990	2,516
Lewisham	4,700	3,400	2,500	2,006	2,514	2,500	2,500	1,763	2,430	†2,250	2,694	2,286	2,196	2,348
Merton	1,533	1,968	2,500	2,540	2,540	3,061	2,123	236	122	†312	†168	†224	†336	411
Newham	1,730	2,357	2,337	2,321	1,894	2,194	2,325	1,154	†1,073	†1,670	1,537	1,504	1,243	1,799
Redbridge	2,100	2,500	2,600	2,600	2,513	2,534	2,559	320	390	315	310	522	463	339
Richmond upon Thames	2,350	2,629	2,883	*	2,918	2,955	2,985	158	332	297	†209	143	165	213
Southwark	2,400	1,525	3,750	2,290	1,500	1,500	1,500	3,985	4,275	3,986	4,710	4,978	5,093	4,002
Sutton	1,083	695	794	649	434	795	820	†217	317	335	270	189	152	210
Tower Hamlets	510	510	400	450	400	403	438	2,192	2,811	3,138	2,951	2,434	2,700	2,390
Waltham Forest	2,106	2,507	2,502	2,510	2,526	2,472	2,486	727	940	1,265	1,131	1,087	896	851
Wandsworth	3,194	3,780	4,619	3,857	3,910	3,725	2,102	2,257	2,770	2,511	†2,406	2,029	1,697	1,937
Westminster	4,150	6,230	5,736	7,426	8,000	8,000	7,800	912	1,770	2,064	1,747	1,853	2,060	1,688
	67,000	71,400	83,300	82,800	91,800	91,700	88,300	46,000	49,800	49,000	46,400	42,700	40,500	39,700

* Not known.
† One or more elements not known.
n/a=Not applicable. *Source:* HIP returns.

Table 2

Change in vacant dwellings in Greater London by borough 1978 to 1984 at 1 April in each year

	Private Sector						Public Sector					
	1978 to 1979	1979 to 1980	1980 to 1981	1981 to 1982	1982 to 1983	1983 to 1984	1978 to 1979	1979 to 1980	1980 to 1981	1981 to 1982	1982 to 1983	1983 to 1984
Greater London Council	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	†	†	†	†	†	†
City of London	0	*	*	*	*	*	−1	9	110	65	†	†
Barking & Dagenham	26	−159	93	*	*	*	540	−524	4	†	†	†
Barnet	106	1,471	18	21	−625	−122	480	−182	−115	14	10	−9
Bexley	664	63	−26	15	295	22	†	†	46	−3	−17	48
Brent	0	300	0	486	−662	129	50	−150	−448	−150	52	121
Bromley	−76	−350	−42	731	−393	−93	−14	−70	†	†	†	†
Camden	−37	27	7	−319	506	287	−1,045	−212	−137	†	†	−31
Croydon	0	200	0	−261	−297	686	−80	70	2	69	25	−34
Ealing	−93	842	−59	−161	−11	95	88	185	70	−155	−74	−49
Enfield	*	*	*	*	−249	−721	†	†	†	†	†	†
Greenwich	39	147	−300	−246	1,066	−80	173	−367	322	264	−323	94
Hackney	150	700	420	−90	−800	573	603	550	580	10	−991	−322
Hammersmith & Fulham	1,377	−706	326	1,007	20	68	†	607	−336	−108	−187	−159
Haringey	−435	−814	409	892	540	348	282	121	−369	−872	−105	20
Harrow	250	108	504	−292	147	−305	13	−57	−6	25	23	27
Havering	100	138	46	6	18	20	100	−184	123	4	51	−66
Hillingdon	−570	260	15	5	21	29	461	−500	284	−177	−184	−129
Hounslow	557	−12	−651	1,848	−1,125	430	673	50	−320	152	−145	−192
Islington	−32	3,276	547	−555	183	−2,075	983	−957	−547	−381	−183	39
Kensington & Chelsea	−334	3,139	48	2,080	0	0	134	†	†	139	−342	−156
Kingston upon Thames	370	6	−205	−20	446	−104	†	†	−12	23	−3	37
Lambeth	20	530	0	1,290	−380	0	−220	†	†	−560	350	−474
Lewisham	−1,300	−900	−494	508	−14	0	667	†	†	−408	−90	152
Merton	435	532	40	0	521	−938	−104	†	†	†	†	†
Newham	627	−20	−16	−427	300	131	†	†	†	−33	−261	556
Redbridge	400	100	0	−87	21	25	70	−75	−5	212	−59	−124
Richmond upon Thames	279	254	*	*	37	30	174	−35	†	†	22	48
Southwark	−875	2,225	−1,460	−790	0	0	290	−289	724	268	115	−1,091
Sutton	−388	99	−145	−215	361	25	†	18	−65	−81	−37	58
Tower Hamlets	0	−110	50	−50	3	35	619	327	−187	−517	266	−310
Waltham Forest	401	−5	8	16	−54	14	213	325	−134	−44	−191	−45
Wandsworth	586	839	−762	53	−185	−1,623	513	−259	†	†	−332	240
Westminster	2,080	−491	1,690	574	0	−200	858	294	−317	106	207	−372
	+4,300	+11,900	−500	+9,000	−100	−3,400	+3,800	−800	−2,600	−3,700	−2,200	−800

* Not known (Private sector).
† One or more elements not known (Public sector).
n/a=Not applicable.

Merseyside (Partnership Committee)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to call a meeting of the partnership committee for Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I have no plans at this stage to call a meeting of the Liverpool partnership committee. My officials have met the three partners — Liverpool city council, Merseyside county council and the Liverpool health authority — about their inputs to the 1985-86 partnership programme, and discussions are continuing.

Local Government Reform (Merseyside)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations from individuals residing in the county of Merseyside he has now received *(a)* opposing his plans to abolish Merseyside county council and *(b)* favourable to his plans.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The informtion requested is not available in this form. However, my Department has received over 1,000 coupons opposing abolition deriving from advertisements placed, and leaflets circulated, by the Merseyside county council, at the ratepayers' expense, which make alarmist and unjustified claims about the effects of abolition.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors he took into account about the effect on modernisation programmes for inter-war council dwellings when deciding to reduce further the prescribed proportion of capital receipts which local authorities can retain to supplement their capital expenditure.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government take account of need in setting the level of gross capital expenditure provision fol local authorities. The proposed reduction in the prescribed proportion is one of the steps which we consider necessary to deliver that level of gross expenditure without overspending.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he is having with representatives of the Metropolitan borough of Wolverhampton about the effect of his decisions on capital receipts on plans for building an extension to the town's central library, improving its information facilities, replacing its central baths and extending the central art gallery.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received no representations from the council on this matter.

Geographic Information

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the setting up of a committee of inquiry into the handling of geographic information in the United Kingdom, as agreed in the Government's response to the first report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on "Remote Sensing and Digital Mapping", Cmnd. 9320.

Mr. Waldegrave: The committee of inquiry has now been established. Its terms of reference are:

"To advise the Secretary of State for the Environment within two years on the future handling of geographic information in the United Kingdom, taking account of modern developments in information technology and of markets needs".

I am pleased to announced that Lord Chorley has been appointed as chairman of the committee, and Mr. Walter Smith, who retires in March from his present position as director general of the Ordnance Survey, is to be deputy chairman. The remaining members of the committee will be appointed shortly and the committee will begin its work in April.

Sand and Gravel Association (Exhibition)

Mr. Dorrell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to New Horizons in Restoration, by the Sand and Gravel Association, to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Macfarlane: Arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 11 to 15 March.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the moneys which they have been entitled to spend under *(a)* section 137 and *(b)* section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 have been spent in each of the last six years by (i) the Greater London council, (ii) each of the London borough councils, (iii) the Common Council of the City of London, (iv) each of the metropolitan county councils and (v) each of the metropolitan district councils.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *62*]: Details of expenditure under section 142 are not collected centrally. Expenditure under section 137 was not collected centrally prior to 1982-83. The available information is as follows:

Authorities' expenditure under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 as a percentage of their maximum entitlement

	1982-83	*1983-8*
Greater London Council	21·7	
City of London	0	0
Inner London Boroughs		
Camden	20·1	
Greenwich	23·9	
Hackney	6·3	
Hammersmith and Fulham	78·7	
Islington	34·4	
Kensington and Chelsea	35·2	30
Lambeth	51·4	
Lewisham	27·4	
Southwark	0	57
Tower Hamlets	*	
Wandsworth	29·0	45
Westminster	0	
Outer London Boroughs		
Barking and Dagenham	2·1	46
Barnet	4·0	4
Bexley	0·1	1
Brent	63·2	22
Bromley	0	0
Croydon	0	2
Ealing	0	33
Enfield	0·2	0
Haringey	6·6	41

	1982-83	1983-84
Harrow	1·1	0
Havering	0	0
Hillingdon	0	6·1
Hounslow	1·6	4·5
Kingston-upon-Thames	0	0
Merton	0·7	0
Newham	4·9	0
Redbridge	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·2	0
Sutton	2·1	2·1
Waltham Forest	0·6	15·3
Metropolitan Counties		
Greater Manchester	20·6	59·4
Merseyside	91·3	23·9
South Yorkshire	16·6	14·9
Tyne and Wear	18·2	29·1
West Midlands	76·4	93·5
West Yorkshire	94·8	49·9
Metropolitan Districts		
Barnsley	40·2	48·8
Birmingham	99·3	36·3
Bolton	1·8	18·4
Bradford	8·9	11·8
Bury	1·6	5·6
Calderdale	6·4	5·7
Coventry	11·5	2·1
Doncaster	21·5	*
Dudley	0	0
Gateshead	69·0	68·8
Kirklees	0	5·3
Knowsley	0·1	52·2
Leeds	67·2	0
Liverpool	7·6	*
Manchester	2·2	*
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	18·0	28·4
North Tyneside	25·4	31·2
Oldham	0	7·6
Rochdale	33·1	54·5
Rotherham	0	*
Salford	2·5	9·2
Sandwell	0·6	103·8
Sefton	0	0
Sheffield	22·4	55·3
Solihull	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0
St. Helens	0	0
Stockport	0	0
Sunderland	0	26·2
Tameside	28·3	40·7
Trafford	17·9	10·5
Wakefield	40·0	39·4
Walsall	1·1	*
Wigan	0	5·4
Wirral	17·9	*
Wolverhampton	14·2	*

* Not available

TRANSPORT

Channel Link

85. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now received the report of the Anglo-French working party on the conditions which developers of a Channel link would require to conform to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. My right hon. Friend will make a statement in the near future.

Fatal Road Accidents

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of a single fatal road accident.

Mrs. Chalker: The average cost of a fatal road accident in Great Britain is estimated at £167,160 in 1983 (the most recent year for which an estimate is available); this figure includes resource costs and an allowance for pain, grief and suffering.

Crossing (Thatched House, Leytonstone High Road)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations have been received for a pedestrian phase to the junction crossing at the Thatched House, Leytonstone high road; and when his decision is likely to be made.

Mrs. Chalker: No further representations have been received, but I have just written to the hon. Member with details of some layout improvements we are proposing to help pedestrians.

British Rail (Asbestos)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what programmes British Rail has made to identify asbestos in its installations; what discoveries have been made, by location; what steps have been taken to (i) remove or (ii) otherwise make such asbestos safe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is primarily a matter for the management of British Rail. However I can tell the hon. Member that British Rail has an agreement with its trade unions on a timetable for removing asbestos from rolling stock by 1987. Asbestos in buildings and structures is removed or sealed in position as soon as there is any possibility that fibres may be released into the atmosphere. If it has to be disturbed for repairs it is removed as necessary.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what programmes London Regional Transport has to identify asbestos in its installations; what dicoveries have been made by location of *(a)* blue asbestos, *(b)* brown asbestos and *(c)* white asbestos; what plans there are for its (i) removal and (ii) otherwise making safe; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: This is primarily a matter for the management of London Regional Transport. However I understand that London Regional Transport has surveyed all installations containing asbestos and has identified its type.

Asbestos in buildings and structures is removed or sealed in position as soon as there is any possibility that fibres may be released into the atmosphere; if it has to be disturbed for repairs, it is removed as necessary.

London Regional Transport (Asbestos)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government will make a specific allocation of funds to London Regional Transport for the identification and subsequent removal or making safe of asbestos in London Regional Transport installations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I would expect LRT management to take account of prospective requirements for expenditure on asbestos removal or similar measures when reaching a view as to their future external finance requirements.

Public Transport (Reports)

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of the reports his Department commissioned on "Tendering of Bus Services" by Steer, Davis & Gleave Ltd., and on concessionary fares by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has been engaged on two research projects, the first concerned with the use of on-board equipment to process concessionary fares and the second with the general question of methods of reimbursement for concessionary fare schemes. The first project contains confidential information of a commercial nature which it would not be appropriate to publish, but it is my intention to make a report on the second project available to the House when the work has been finalised.

The report by Steer, Davies and Gleave on competitive tendering also contains information provided in confidence and is unsuitable for publication. I am arranging for a summary of its conclusions to be placed in the Library.

WALES

Development Agencies (Expenditure)

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total sum of money spent by the Welsh development agency on promotion and marketing for the financial years 1982-83 and 1983-84; and what is the expected spending for the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Development Agency spent £2·3 million on promotion and marketing in 1982-83 and, in addition, made a grant of £1 million to the Development Corporation for Wales of which about £0·5 million was spent in the promotion overseas of Wales as a location for industrial investment. In 1983-84 promotional expenditure by the WDA, including expenditure by WINvest which succeeded the Development Corporation for Wales on 1 April 1983, totalled £2·6 million. The Agency, again including WINvest, expects to spend about £3 million on promotion and marketing in 1984-85. These figures exclude salaries and other related costs.

Industrial Aid (South Glamorgan)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of offers of selective financial assistance made for projects in South Glamorgan from *(a)* July 1975 to May 1979 and *(b)* May 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In the periods 1 July 1975 to 30 April 1979 and 1 May 1979 to 26 February 1985 the numbers of offers of regional selective assistance made in South Glamorgan were 46 and 149 respectively.

Holyhead (Assistance)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will conduct a review into the level of government financial assistance to the area of Holyhead.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. I refer my hon. Friend to my letter to him of 10 December 1984.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number and percentage of houses in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Mid-Glamorgan and *(c)* Clwyd which require repairs costing (i) less than £4,500 and (ii) more than £4,500 in both the public and private sector.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The most recent reliable information concerning the cost of repairs of housing in Wales is contained in the "Welsh House Condition Survey (1981)," a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what number and percentage of houses in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Mid-Glamorgan, *(c)* Cynon Valley and *(d)* Clwyd lack one or more of the defined basic amenities.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The most recent information about the condition of Welsh housing at national and county level is published in the "Welsh House Condition Survey (1981)," a copy of which is in the Library.

The latest information available about housing conditions in the Cynon Valley is contained in a survey commissioned by the borough council.

Clothing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers employed in the Welsh textile and clothing industry for each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Doctors

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of practising doctors per 1,000 population in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to general medical practitioners. At 1 October 1984 the provisional rates for unrestricted principals in Wales and Mid-Glamorgan were 0·53 and 0·5 respectively. Details for England and Scotland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Social Services and Scotland respectively.

Ysbyty Gwynedd (Renal Unit)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he plans to have any discussions with relevant trade unions, including the National Union of Public Employees, concerning the proposed subsidiary renal unit at Ysbyty Gwynedd at Bangor.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. In relation to establishing a renal unit in a particular locality I would expect the district health authority as our agent to undertake any discussions with trades unions and others as necessary.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Council of Ministers

Sir Peter Blaker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. Heads of State and Government will meet at the European Council in Brussels on 29-30 March. At present seven meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for March.

The Environment Council is due to meet on 7 March to discuss the draft directives on the control of vehicle emissions, air pollution from large combustion plant, the use and disposal of containers of liquids for human consumption and the reduction of titanium dioxide waste. It will also consider the draft of a new directive to control the discharge of dangerous waste into water.

The Economic and Finance Council is expected to meet on 11 March to discuss the financial framework for the guidance section of the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund over the next five years; the Commission's quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community; points arising from the European Court of Auditors annual report for 1983; and the progress report on the unit trust directive concerning the harmonisation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions. The Council may also consider changes in the Community loan mechanism; procedures for implementing Budget discipline; and an increase in the Euratom lending ceiling.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 11-12 March and 25-27 March to consider the Commission's price proposals for 1985 and possibly agricultural structures such as aids for investment in agriculture holdings, for forestry and for the protection of the environment.

The Energy Council is expected to meet on 15 March to discuss proposals for new programmes of support for energy demonstration projects and hydrocarbon technology projects; the conclusions of the review of energy pricing policy in the Community and the rational use of energy in buildings; and a Commission paper on the refining and petroleum product situation in the Community. Ministers may also discuss aids to the solid fuels sector and the energy aspects of the draft directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plant.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet in a specially extended session on 17-20 March to prepare the Community position for negotiations with Spain and Portugal. It will also continue its discussions of the new own resources decision and the financing of the 1985 Budget, and the new Commission proposals for integrated Mediterranean programmes; and will consider the proposal for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT. Ministers may also consider a draft negotiating mandate for the second EC/Yugoslavia financial protocol; and the Community's policy towards its Mediterranean partners following enlargement.

The Industry Council is expected to meet on either 22 or 25 March to discuss both internal and external steel issues, including proposed amendments to the steel aids code, the supply of ferrous scrap and exports of steel to the United States. Ministers may also discuss advanced manufacturing technologies, especially standards, and the tariff structure for imports of consumer electronic goods and semi-conductors.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Equipment (Blast and Heat Protection)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he hopes to issue guidance to industry on the protection of vital equipment against blast and heat damage.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

COCOM Talks

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement concerning the outcome of the recent COCOM talks; and whether any change is proposed in the list review procedure.

Mr. Channon: The Co-ordinating Committee held a high-level meeting in Paris on 6 and 7 February. The meeting reviewed progress made in COCOM since the previous high level meeting in April 1983, which was considered to be satisfactory both in respect of co-ordination between the Member States and the updating of COCOM's lists of controlled products and technologies. The meeting agreed guidelines for the content and method of future work. It also approved a modification of the procedure for reviewing its lists, which will be divided into four segments, each to be studied once every four years.

European Space Agency

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he intends to have with the Science and Engineering Research Council about the annual 5 per cent. rise which he agreed should be contributed to the European Space Agency's mandatory science budget between 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Pattie: I agreed to this increase in the European Space Agency's mandatory science budget on behalf of the Government at the successful ministerial Council of the agency on 30 and 31 January. This followed full consultations with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and with the Chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council, both of whom were represented in the United Kingdom delegation. This Department and the SERC continue to maintain regular contact in order to ensure that the Government pursues consistent and effective policies in all the activities of the Agency.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of financial guarantees under the loan guarantee scheme which his Department was called upon to meet in the financial year 1983-84 because the business had failed; what proportion this represented of loans under the scheme; what are the equivalent figures for 1984-85 to date; and what has been the cost to public funds.

Mr. Trippier: In financial year 1983-84, 1,462 guarantees were called, 10·2 per cent. of the guarantees

issued in that year. In 1984-85, 1,490 guarantees were called up to 31 January 1985, 9·4 per cent. of the guarantees issued. The net cost of the scheme to date is £66·1 million.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases where a loan guarantee has been called upon and his Department have had to meet the cost due to the failure of the business concerned, papers have been referred to the police.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has not referred any of these cases to the police.

Drugs (Patent Life)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to provide extensions to the existing conditions of patent life for the research and development of drugs.

Mr. Butcher: The question of drug patent life is not only a matter of our domestic law; it involves consideration of the United Kingdom's obligations under the European patent convention. I intend to seek the opinion of the Government's standing advisory committee on patents and to this end have asked the pharmaceutical industry to prepare a paper setting out its case.

Letter Post Service

Mr Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response the Post Office has made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the letter post service of the Post Office in the head post office areas of Glasgow, Belfast and Cardiff, and in the numbered London postal districts, published on 12 September 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have now received the initial response of the Post Office to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission published last September. I am placing copies of the Post Office's response in the Library of the House.

I regard it as a very serious matter that the commission was unable to come to a firm conclusion that the Post Office was not pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest in providing a letter post services in London, Belfast, Cardiff and Glasgow. The commission suspended judgment on the public interest question taking the view that this would depend chiefly on whether the Post Office made adequate efforts to implement charges which were largely common ground between the Post Office and the commission.

The Commission has produced a particularly thorough and comprehensive report and has made 78 recommendations covering financial control, costing and forecasting; efficiency measurement; personnel and industrial relations; mechanisation; and quality of service. The commission took the view that the Post Office should give immediate and particular emphasis to introducing a proper system of work measurement and work standards; introducing more effective budgetary control and developing a better understanding of the costs of the business; and completing the letter post plan and bringing its performance up to the levels of efficiency recommended in the report by the dates stated.

In its response, the Post Office has accepted 7
78 recommendations and has indicated that, i
cases. the recommendations reflect the direction
Office thinking and action already in hand.

A number of the recommendations have
industrial relations implications. The Post Office
engaged in a series of major discussions with th
of Communications Workers with the aim of ach
negotiated programme of reforms and impr
including those related to the commission's recon
tions. These discussions have now reached the sta
the UCW has called a special conference for 4-6
seek to remove restrictive mandates imposed by
conferences covering amongst other things new
ogy, mechanisation, work measurement and the
between overtime and incentive payments. T
Office recognises the value and importance of a su
conclusion to these negotiations and would p
resolve any differences with the UCW in th
However, in its response, the Post Office has i
that, in the absence of a negotiated settleme
prepared to introduce the required measures by e
action as the commission has signalled that it sh

The Post Office's response indicates that some
is being made in relation to the comm
recommendations in some areas of work measure
standard times. This is also true in relation to c
the recommendations for improving budgetary
The Post Office has decided to create a perman
of mails network inspectors as part of a co-ordina
for improved quality of service performance at ev
of authority in the postal business. The commissi
a number of other recommendations aimed at
quality of service performance up to target levels
cent. of first-class letters delivered the work
following collection and 96 per cent. of seco
letters delivered by the third working day f
collection. The Post Office has accepted all
commission's recommendations in this area.

In view of the commission's findings on th
interest, I attach importance to positive action by
Office to implement the commission's recomme
speedily. My Department has begun discussions
Post Office on a detailed implementation p
provision for progress checks and a timetable fo
rapid implementation of those recommendations
by the Post Office. I propose to make a further s
once these discussions are concluded.

Ford Motor Co. Ltd.

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for T
Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Co
Report on the Ford Motor Company Ltd.
published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: The report is published today

On 11 May 1984, the Director General of Fai
referred to the Commission under section
Competition Act 1980 Ford's policy and practi
granting to any person (other than to persons s
body parts to Ford) a licence to manufacture or s
United Kingdom any replacement body part wh
claims to be entitled to prohibit such manufactu
by virtue of the copyright subsisting in the dra
designs of body parts.

The commission concluded that Ford's practice was anti-competitive in that it had the effect of preventing competition in the supply in the United Kingdom of replacement body panels or part panels for Ford cars and vans. They also concluded that the practice was clearly adverse to the public interest, because it eliminated competition from independent manufacturers which had had a beneficial effect on prices and on innovation.

The commission considered that the public interest in competition, Ford's interest in obtaining an adequate return on its investment and the public interest in allowing a reward for innovation and investment could all be met if, for body panels, the period of protection under the Registered Designs Act 1949, were to be limited to five years. It recommended also that a corresponding amendment be made to section 10 of the Copyright Act 1956 and that under that Act the period of protection for body panels not registrable under the Registered Designs Act should be reduced to a period not exceeding five years. However, they recognised that a more general reform of the legislation, applying more widely than body panels, could also remedy the adverse effects which they had identified.

The commission recognised that changes of the law would take time. They suggested that in the intervening period the preservation of competition in the supply of replacement body parts for Ford vehicles could depend upon Ford's readiness to respect the public interest as they had defined it, and to modify its position accordingly.

I accept the findings of this report, which is an important contribution to the debate over the relationship between the laws governing intellectual property rights, and those governing competition. The Government are reviewing the law of copyright and industrial design protection in the light of consultations on the Green Paper on "Copyright, Design and Performers Protection" (Cmnd. 8302) and the Green Paper on "Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9117). We shall take account of the report's recommendations in respect of body panels in our consideration of wider legislative reform.

Meanwhile, in the light of the report's findings, I am asking the Director General of Fair Trading to open discussions with the company with a view to securing appropriate undertakings.

Hall Russell, Shipbuilders

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the companies which have submitted tenders for the purchase of Hall Russell, Shipbuilders, Aberdeen under the Government's privatisation proposals.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *10*]: I refer to the reply my hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on 22 February at column 631.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

No-passport Excursion Scheme

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the withdrawal of the no-passport excursion scheme has had on the numbers of short-stay travellers crossing between French and British ports.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 14 February at column *270*. The full information required for our review of the no-passport excursion arrangement is not yet available, and I am not yet able, therefore, to provide the details requested.

British Broadcasting Corporation

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which external services of the British Broadcasting Corporation will be affected and what number of posts will be lost arising from his decision to scale down the services' funding for the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Renton: BBC external services' funding for the 1985-86 financial year at approximately £91 million is 7 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1984-85. The external services were requested to absorb £1·2 million in risen costs relating to pay and pay-related awards. They have informed us that they will be able to do this without reducing their broadcasting services. It is for the BBC to decide whether any posts need be lost. We have been told, however, that no redundancies are envisaged.

Falklands Campaign (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now place in the Library a copy of the minute from the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Pym) dated 1 May 1982 and referred to in the Prime Minister's letter of 8 October 1984 to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, 22 October, *Official Report*, column 469.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. The minute is a classified document. It is, however, included in a set of documents which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is arranging for members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs to see, under appropriate security arrangements.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Victim Support

1. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make available additional funding for local victim support schemes.

58. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide additional funding for staff recruitment for victim support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: We will be considering this possibility in the course of the 1985 public expenditure survey.

52. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his response to the conclusions on victim support schemes of the Home Affair Committee in its report, published on 12 December 1984 on compensation and support for the victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: We hope to publish the Government's reply to the Home Affairs Committee report shortly.

Sunday Trading

2. **Mr. Lyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to make a statement on the Auld report.

60. **Mr. Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make a statement on the Auld report.

78. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Auld report on shop hours.

79. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce his response to the Auld committee recommendations on the Sunday trading laws.

80. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce his decision on the Auld report on shop hours.

Mr. Brittan: I propose to make a statement very soon.

50. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent representations he has received about reform of the Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a number of representations about the recommendations of the Auld report concerning Sunday trading, some in favour and some against. My right hon. and learned Friend is taking these into account.

Detention Centres

8. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to alter the regime in detention centres during 1985.

Mr. Brittan: As I said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on 13 February, at columns 196-97, a new regime for all detention centres will come into operation on 6 March.

28. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders will be subject to the new regime for detention centres when it comes into operation on 6 March.

Mr. Mellor: The new regime will apply in all 18 detention centres in England and Wales; offenders subject to detention centre orders may be held elsewhere only for temporary purposes or medical reasons. Information on numbers of receptions under detention centre orders is contained in Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue No. 2/1985, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Entry Clearance Procedure

11. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make changes in entry clearance procedures to ensure that the wives and children of men settled in the United Kingdom are able to exercise their entitlement to enter the United Kingdom with the minimum of impediment and delay.

Mr. Waddington: The entry clearance procedure is a sensible and effective means of assessing whether women and children seeking to settle here are entitled to do so. There are no plans to relax this requirement alth improvements are made in the administrative arr ments wherever possible, within the constraints o resources available.

Prisons (Education)

12. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of Sta the Home Department whether he will make a state about education facilities at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: The facilities for education at Holl prison were inspected by Her Majesty's inspecto schools between 26 and 30 March 1984 and their was published on 14 February this year. Action o report's recommendations will be taken when Holloway special project committee gives us its repo the regime as a whole in July.

47. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State f Home Department if he will make a statement o current state of prison education at Holloway priso other penal establishments.

Mr. Mellor: On the question of Holloway, I v refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier toda question from the hon. Member for Wolverham North-East (Mrs. Short). More generally, the p department is continuing the development of p educational services reflecting the important role they in prison regimes as a whole, in accordance wit Government reply to the first report from the Educa Science and Arts Committee, Session 1982-83, HC (Cmnd. 9126).

Fire Precautions

15. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department how many representations he received advocating a need for a national code of pr on means of escape in case of fire in houses in mul occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Over the last five years we received a total of 28 inquiries from 14 sep individuals and bodies about progress on the co guidance for fire safety in houses in multiple occupa In addition, a number of hon. Members have rec written to my right hon. and learned Friend on this n and have tabled questions on the subject. It is hope a draft code, to form the basis for consultation interested organisations, will be available in the nex months.

Licensing Hours

16. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department if his Department has yet complet review of licensing hours.

Mr. Mellor: We have no immediate plans to re the licensing law, but my right hon. and learned Fri keeping the matter under review and will conside results of the survey into the working of extended lice hours in Scotland, which my right hon. Friend Secretary of State for Scotland expects to be availa the summer.

Immigration

17. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the refusal rate for *(a)* husbands and *(b)* fiancés in the Indian subcontinent in each quarter of 1984; and what percentage of these refusals was wholly or partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Waddington: About one third of all applications in the Indian subcontinent for entry clearance from husbands and about one half of those from fiancés were refused in each of the first three quarters of 1984. Applications refused solely or partly because of the primary purpose test accounted for about five sixths of all refusals for both husbands and fiancés. Information for the fourth quarter is not yet available.

19. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of husbands and fiancés applying for entry clearance in New Delhi is refused wholly or partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Waddington: About 70 per cent. of applications for entry clearance from husbands and fiancés decided in New Delhi in the first three quarters of 1984 were refused solely or partly on primary purpose grounds.

23. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he takes in respect of immigration officers and entry clearance officers whose interview notes reveal a less than impartial attitude towards applicants for settlement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend, and I, expect all the staff of the immigration and nationality department, including immigration officers, to consider all individual applications impartially and without discrimination on grounds of colour, race or religion. Both the conditions of service of immigration officers, and the immigration rules prohibit such discrimination. If the interviews conducted by the officers or their interview notes, both of which are monitored by supervising officers, indicate that these requirements are not being met action would be taken. This could include disciplinary action where, for example, racially discriminatory behaviour is proven. The conduct of entry clearance officers is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, but similar action would be taken by his Department.

25. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his response to the report by the Commission for Racial Equality concerning immigration procedures; what plans he has to revise the arrangements for interviewing applicants for immigration into the United Kingdom in order to alleviate problems currently experienced by New Commonwealth citizens; and if he will make a statement.

34. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a copy of the Commission for Racial Equality report on the operation of immigration rules; and whether he will make a statement.

37. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent report by the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration procedures.

61. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his response to the Commission for Racial Equality report about immigration procedures.

70. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce his response to the report of the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration.

81. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his response to the Commission for Racial Equality's report on immigration processes.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a copy of the report. We are studying its detailed recommendations. The Government do not, however, accept the premises on which the CRE bases the report. Immigration control provides the means by which people can show whether they are entitled to come here. In assessing entitlement abuse may be discovered. Testing entitlement and being on guard against abuse are aspects of the same process—not alternatives as appears to be implied by the CRE report. They must be appropriately balanced. But the balance must reflect the fact that from various parts of the world there is continuing pressure to emigrate and people from those parts therefore try to come here and seek work when not entitled to do so. The CRE's failure to acknowledge this fact undermines much of the report's analysis.

41. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of people waiting for a visa to enter the United Kingdom to join either a husband or wife.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is available only for the Indian subcontinent. 5,000 wives in the Indian subcontinent were awaiting a decision on their application for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom at the end of September 1984. This figure includes those who have been interviewed but whose application remains undetermined. The corresponding number of husbands awaiting a decision is given in table 10 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics, Third Quarter, 1984" (Issue 27/84). Figures relating to the end of December 1984 will become available during the first half of March.

53. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chief inspector of the immigration service to discuss immigration controls.

Mr. Brittan: I meet senior officials of the immigration and nationality department, including the chief inspector, as often as the conduct of public business requires.

Official Secrets Act

18. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the Ponting case, he will make a statement on the operation of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has taken note of the diverse views expressed about the operation of the Act in the context of that case.

20. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received calling for the repeal of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

26. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the operation of the Official Secrets Act.

35. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received since 11 February advocating the amendment of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

Mr. Mellor: Up to 27 February, two (including one forwarded by an hon. Member). This excludes parliamentary questions.

39. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government will consider establishing a committee of review to re-assess the efficacy of trials by jury relating to breaches of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so.

Broadcasting (Black Community)

21. **Mr. Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation to discuss broadcasting for the black community.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that through its national television and radio services, together with local radio, the BBC fulfils its undertaking to provide a properly balanced service, which includes making provision for the black community. I do not therefore see the need for a meeting with the Director General.

Coal Industry Dispute

22. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been registered against the police as a result of the miners' strike; and in how many of these complaints the inquiries have been completed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to a question from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

46. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policing of the miners' dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am glad to reaffirm our full support for the police in the action they are taking to maintain order and to ensure that those who wish to exercise their right to go to work are able to do so.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Civil Service what information he has as to how many civil servants have left the Civil Service for jobs in the private sector in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 Fe
c. 55]: The numbers of voluntary resignatio
non-industrial Home Civil Service in the ye
1983 and for the first half of 1984 are g
following table. It is not possible to break th
down according to reasons for leaving but
noted that they include those leaving for famil
well as alternative employment in either th
public sectors.

Voluntary resignations from the non-industrial home

	Numbe
1975	31,60
1976	30,70
1977	37,30
1978	47,60
1979	48,70
1980	33,10
1981	22,10
1982	21,90
1983	*21,10
1984	
January-June	*10,70

* Provisional.
Note: Part-timers count as whole units.
Source: MANDATE.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Coal Industry Dispute

51. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of S
Home Department what custodial sentences
passed by the courts for offences committed
miners' dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: 182 immediate custodi
were imposed by the courts up to and in
February for offences committed in connecti
miners' dispute. This total includes sentenc
custody or detention in a detention centre.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of S
Home Department how many police officers
disciplined as a result of action in relation to
the miners' strike.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that from
1984 to 26 February, 549 complaints were m
the police in connection with policing the cur
and 111 were withdrawn. Two hundred a
contained allegations of assault by police offi
Information on completed investigations
complaints and their outcome is not ye
centrally. I understand that the Police Complai
annual report for 1984 will contain some statist
which reached them in that year on which acti
completed.

Civil Defence

24. **Sir Anthony Kershaw** asked the Secret
for the Home Department if he will advise local
to adopt the international civil defence in
identity card laid down in the Geneva conven

Mr. Giles Shaw: Not at present, but
consideration.

44. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider some shorter title than the civil defence community co-ordinator for the local warden.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall certainly consider my hon. Friend's suggestion, but he will be aware that the title is recommended by the report of the working party on the standardisation of training of civil defence volunteers. A copy of the report is in the Library of the House.

63. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will advise industry on effective shelter designs to protect its employees at their place of work.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department has issued general guidance on the effect of nuclear weapons and on protective measures. Application or development of this guidance in specific areas is a matter for those primarily concerned, in this case my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

65. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what minimum qualifications are required of persons applying for the post of local authority county emergency planning officer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: General guidance is available in Home Office circular No. ES 1/1972, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The appropriate qualifications for any particular post is a matter which properly falls within the discretion of local authorities.

30. **Mr. Woodcock** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will advise local authorities to provide insurance cover for all civil defence volunteers when on duty.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is a matter for local authorities to decide. I am not aware of any difficulties, but if my hon. Friend has any particular aspect in mind I shall be pleased to consider it.

76. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide guidance for local authorities on travel and subsistence rates for civil defence volunteers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the same question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on 31 January, at column 236.

77. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes any new action to encourage local authorities to recruit and train civil defence volunteers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office working party on the standardisation of training of civil defence volunteers has recommended a standard pattern and syllabus of training. The views of the local authority associations which have commented on the draft report are being considered and the final report is expected to be issued soon. A successor working party will consider the development of standardised training material.

Burglary

27. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the priority given by the Metropolitan police to combating rising rates of burglary.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The continuing inclusion of burglary in his strategy for 1985 as one of the Commissioner's operational priorities has our full support. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 20 December, at columns 288-89, of the measures the Commissioner has introduced to further police effectiveness in the investigation of burglary.

Metropolitan Police

29. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Metropolitan police commissioner; and what subjects were discussed.

69. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Brittan: I last formally met the Commissioner on 15 January, when we discussed his report to me on the future strategy of the Metropolitan police.

Prisons

31. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he proposes to reduce the use of overtime in prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Current plans include the recruitment by April 1988 of nearly 2,300 extra staff to enable overtime levels to be reduced. Measures are also being taken to encourage the more efficient deployment of existing staff.

32. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to combat drug trafficking in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are improving the quality of the information available centrally about the incidence of drugs in prisons.

We have increased the complement of specially trained dogs from 28 to 40, and this will enable wider programmes of searching to be undertaken.

We are improving staff training on drugs. A new training package aimed specifically at the problems and needs of the prison service is currently being developed for issue to all prison department establishments.

Terrorism

33. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of Sir Cyril Philips's review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.

Mr. Brittan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 19 February, at column 427.

Television Licences

36. **Mr. Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received calling for changes in the present system of television concessionary licences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Eighty-three hon. Members and 145 members of the public have written in the last three months about the concessionary television licence schemes for retired and disabled people in residential care.

38. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had regarding the British Broadcasting Corporation's submission for an increase in the television licence fee.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Some 270 hon. Members and 950 members of the public have written during the current Session about an increase in television licence fees.

Departmental Staff

40. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff he has in his F6 division; and how many of them have visited local authorities during 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are 37 staff in F6 division. Nine members have visited local authorities during 1984. A number of meetings with local authority representatives have also taken place at the Home Office.

Passports

42. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to revise the list of people authorised to countersign applications for passports.

Mr. Waddington: We have no present plans to amend the notes which describe the qualifications required of persons who countersign passport applications. The occupations mentioned on the application form are as the notes indicate intended only as a guide: other people of similar standing are acceptable.

Crime Prevention (Lighting)

43. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will recommend local authorities and owners of private blocks of flats to install new vandal-proof high luminosity lighting on all balconies and passageways as crime prevention measures.

59. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent his Department's crime prevention unit commends good street lighting to local authorities as a deterrent agaist crime, and in particular theft and street violence.

64. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recommendations have been made by the crime prevention unit to local authorities regarding the use of vandal-proof lighting.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Tottenham, (Mr. Atkinson) on 14 February, at column 234.

BBC (Report)

45. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of St Home Department whether he has yet decided the Peat Marwick Mitchell report on the efficie British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We understand that the B to publish the report by Peat Marwick Mitchell

Police (Training)

48. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of St Home Department whether he is satisfied with th currently offered to police constables.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The extensive training whi constables receive is always subject to a c process of review and improvement.

75. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of Sta Home Department whether he plans to intro changes to the racism awareness training course officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Mem reply given to a question from the hon. Me Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 31 January, at columns

Police Service

49. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of Sta Home Department to what extent metropolita councils have assisted him in formulating his pla future of the police service in their districts follo abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Besides the Associ Metropolitan Authorities, four metropolitan councils commented individually on the proposal to the police service in the White Paper "Streaml Cities" published in October 1983. Some coun since approached the Home Office on particular a the Government's proposals. No other assistance offered.

Wintex Cimex '85

54. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of Stat Home Department if he will make a statemen Department's participation in Wintex Cimex '85 currently taking place.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Officials from the Departm involved in the planning of the United Ki contribution to the exercise and are also taking

Mr. Umaru Dikko

55. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of Sta Home Department if he has received a formal req the Government of Nigeria for the extradition Umaru Dikko.

Mr. Brittan: Yes.

Communications (Monitoring)

56. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of Stat Home Department if he will make a statemen security precautions necessary to monitor the con tions of pressure groups.

Mr. Brittan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to a question from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Shoplifting

57. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many, and what percentage, of women who were tried on indictment with shoplifting in 1984 and who pleaded not guilty were acquitted.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to all those proceeded against for stealing from shops, irrespective of plea and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables 1983," (tables S1.1(A) in Vol. 1 and S2.1(A) in vol. 2 under offence classification 46). Of the total of females who were found guilty of acquitted of stealing from shops at all courts in England and Wales in 1983, 9 per cent. were acquitted. Reliable information on plea is not available; nor is information yet available for 1984.

Crime (Reporting)

62. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with chief constables about incentives for the reporting of criminal activity.

Mr. Giles Shaw: All citizens have a responsibility to report criminal activity to the police, and I know that it is the policy of chief officers of police to encourage them to do so.

Criminal Violence

66. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the levels of criminal violence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent figures available for England and Wales were published on 19 December in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 28/84. In the 12 months to the end of September 1984, the police recorded 112,900 offences of violence against the person, 2·4 per cent. more than in the preceding 12 months. Of these, the more serious offences, including homicide, attempted murder, wounding and endangering life, constituted about one in in 20. The restrictions on parole which my right hon. and learned Friend has introduced are intended to ensure that those imprisoned for the most serious offences of violence serve sentences which adequately reflect the gravity of their crimes.

Information regarding other parts of the United Kingdom should be sought from my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Prisoners (Reforming Techniques)

67. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what psychiatric or other medical evaluation is used in reforming techniques for prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The primary concern of the psychiatric and other medical services available in prison is with the health of the individual. If my hon. Friend has a particular point in mind, my noble Friend will be glad to look into it.

Nuclear Winter

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has held any discussions with the United States Government on the nuclear winter findings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The nuclear winter hypothesis naturally features among those topics mentioned during the continuing contacts between officials of our two Governments.

Demonstrations

71. **Mr. Cabom** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the present policing arrangements for mass demonstrations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The arrangements for policing a mass demonstration are a matter for the chief officer of police concerned.

Grants

72. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of grants authorised by him under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Waddington: Applications for section 11 grant are considered against the criteria set out in Home Office circular No. 97/1982. The continued eligibility of posts for grant is reviewed after three years. We are satisfied with these arrangements which are kept under review.

Wine Tasting

73. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the operation of the licensing arrangements for wine tasting at English vineyards.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware that English wine producers favour amendments to the law on permitted opening hours for licensed premises to enable wine to be sold by the glass at vineyards during the afternoon. My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans for legislation on the licensing law, but the views of English wine producers will be borne in mind in our current review of the licensing hours.

Community Radio

74. **Sir Paul Bryan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the future of local and community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The proposals for the further development of local radio outlined in the third report of the Home Office local radio working party were approved in principle by my noble Friend the Viscount Whitelaw in 1981. Any modification or extension to that pattern would be the subject of a further statement to the House. As regards community radio, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 23 January, at columns 417-18.

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received in respect of the setting up of a wider community radio network;

(2) if he has received any independent representations, other than those from the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Broadcasting Authority, on the availability of wavelengths for the proposed system of community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Haywood) on 23 January, at columns 417-18, we have received about 120 letters on community radio, together with a similar number of telephone inquiries. Most of the approaches have been from persons wishing to set up community radio stations, and some have referred to the availability and allocation of frequencies.

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a further announcement about his plans for the development of a wider community radio network.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As outlined in the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Haywood) on 23 January, at columns 417-18, my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make a further announcement before too long in the light of our study of the means by which community radio can best be taken forward.

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy, in determining commercial criteria for the new community radio system, to take account of the extent to which such criteria may affect the ability of small businesses to participate.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We regard it as important that community broadcasting should provide opportunities for those, whether voluntary groups, small businesses or otherwise, who are best able to reflect the interests of the communities they wish to serve.

Anti-street Crime Operation (Brixton)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis of representations made to the Commissioner by Lambeth council police committee concerning the special police anti-street crime operation launched in Brixton in December 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that Lambeth council's police committee wrote to the commander of L District on 25 January expressing its opposition to the targeting and surveillance operation launched by the police in Brixton on 21 January. In particular, the committee claimed that the operation had gone ahead without any form of consultation with the people of Lambeth. In reply, the commander pointed out that the operation was considered necessary to combat a serious increase in crime in the area, that he had received numerous requests for such action and that the proposed operation had been fully discussed in public on 15 January at a meeting of the Lambeth Community/Police Consultative Group (on which the Lambeth council is represented) and had been endorsed by the group.

I understand that provisional results from the operation are encouraging.

Police Establishment (Leyton)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the police establishment number for the area covering Leyton and the number available for duty in the area for each month since March 1984; how many in the establishment have been sent on weekly tours of duty in mining areas; how many such weekly tours there have been since March 1984; and how many home beat officers in the area have been diverted into mining areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the information readily available is as follows. The total police establishment and strength of "J" district (which includes the Leyton division) for each month since March 1984 are as set out in the following table. Officers from "J" district have been sent to the mining areas for periods of duty ranging from one to eight days on 39 occasions since March 1984. The average number of officers sent on each occasion was 53. Information about the number of home beat officers sent on mutual aid duties could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Metropolitan Police "J" District
Police Establishment and Strength (March 1984—January 1985)

	District establishment	*District strength*
1984		
March	1,139	994
April	1,139	998
May	1,139	1,002
June	1,138	996
July	1,138	1,006
August	1,138	1,000
September	1,138	996
October	1,138	997
November	1,138	1,002
December	1,136	1,008
1985		
January	1,136	1,004

Children (Carers)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made with his review of the arrangements for the disclosure of information to prospective employers about any relevant criminal background of persons seeking to work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity; when he expects to conclude it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly on the terms of reference for the review and on the brisk timetable which he will set for the review's completion.

Miss Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the most recent report he has had from the West Mercia police about its investigation into the case of the late Miss Hilda Murrell.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of West Mercia constabulary has kept my right hon. and learned Friend informed of continuing inquiries in this case. I understand

that the latest information, including that provided by the hon. Member, has not served to take the investigation further.

HMS Conqueror (Log Book)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the cost to public funds of the recent visit to St. Lucia by two officers of his force to conduct inquiries into the loss of the navigator's log book from HMS Conqueror; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the two officers who went to the West Indies departed from the United Kingdom on 3 February and returned on 20 February. The cost of the return air fare was £1,363 per officer. During their stay, each officer was entitled to a daily subsistence allowance and reimbursement of additional expenditure on items such as official telephone calls. The Director of Public Prosecutions, at whose request the visit was made, will fully reimburse the Metropolitan police.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Cabom asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been made against police officers in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years; and how many have been upheld.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information about complaints made against the police and their outcome is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. The reports are available in the Library of the House.

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of neighbourhood watch schemes.

Mr. Shaw: We welcome the contribution neighbourhood watch schemes are making to police-community co-operation to prevent crime. While it is too early to draw firm general conclusions, initial indications from a number of schemes are that neighbourhood watch can be effective. Evaluation of neighbourhood watch is currently being conducted in the Metropolitan police district and we await the results with interest.

Betting Offices

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a consultation document on the rules governing betting offices following the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) Act 1984.

Mr. Brittan: A consultation document has been published today and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. In addition, copies have been sent to those people who appear to have an interest in the rules governing betting offices and copies may also be obtained by writing to E3 Division, the Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. I shall want to look carefully at the comments received in response to the consultation document before bringing forward regulations affecting the displays which are allowed outside betting offices or an order changing the facilities which may be provided on the premises.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Lighting

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the projected expenditure for 1985-86 on the provision of new road lighting in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimated expenditure on the provision of new street lighting in 1985-86 is £2·6 million.

Belfast (Cross-town Rail Link)

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessments have been made of the possible economic and social advantages for Northern Ireland of a cross-town rail link in Belfast between York road station and central station.

Mr. Chris Patten: The economic and social advantages were examined at the public inquiry into the Belfast Transport Strategy Review in 1977. A new strategy plan for the Belfast urban area is being prepared and this will include a review of transportation strategy for which updated analyses of the costs and benefits of component proposals will be prepared.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Government's proposals to the European Commission for the regeneration of Belfast include the provision of funds for a cross-town rail link.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Belfast integrated operations document presented to the European Commission identifies a large number of projects. However, only the projects in schedule 1 to the document have funds committed to them. The implementation of projects in schedules II and III is dependent on funds becoming available, and the cross-harbour rail link is a schedule III project.

RUC (Chief Constable)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary last had a meeting with the Chief Commissioner of the police in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Scott: 19 April 1983.

District Council Members (Expenses)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the allowances and expenses for which members of district councils qualify.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Firearms

82. **Sir John Farr** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied that the system for preventing the illegal entry of firearms into the United Kingdom is operating satisfactorily.

Mr. Hayhoe: Although it is never possible to be wholly satisfied under a system of selected checks, nevertheless I have no evidence that existing controls are inadequate.

Road Building

Mr. David Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer to a question from the hon. Member for Aberdeen North, (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, 24 January, column *1120*, he will provide the figures which lie behind his statement that road building will increase substantially in 1986 in real terms.

Mr. Lawson: The phrase "next year" in my statement refers to the next financial year 1985-86, rather than the calendar year 1986.

Provision for expenditure on new road construction in 1985-86 (excluding structural and other maintenance) is £619 millions, an increase of £34 millions (6 per cent.) over provision in 1984-85.

Inland Revenue Staff

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, on what dates the last two reviews of arrangements for emergency staffing in the Inland Revenue took place;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, whether the arrangements for emergency staff in the Inland Revenue are reviewed at national or regional level in so far as they affect district offices;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, why the regional controller, north-west, Inland Revenue, in a letter to district officers referred to staff levels in an emergency such as a dispute in the power industry leading to electricity cuts or a tanker drivers' strike.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Pound Sterling

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table publishing the real value of the pound sterling, taking 1964 as base year, from 1964 in each year to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Lawson: The information requested is as follows:

	Real Sterling Exchange Rate Index (annual averages)*
1964	100·0
1965	100·1
1966	99·5
1967	99·4
1968	85·2
1969	83·2
1970	84·4
1971	88·5
1972	90·6
1973	81·8
1974	82·1
1975	88·0
1976	80·6
1977	80·0
1978	83·8
1979	94·2
1980	113·4
1981	113·9
1982	108·0
1983	99·8
1984	94·7

* The real Exchange Rate Index (ERI) is calculated by deflating the nominal ERI by a trade-weighted index of United Kingdom price movements relative to those in competitors' economies (using GDP deflators). The weights in the index are as in the IMF's Multilateral Exchange Rate Model.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the annual percentage change in manufacturing output for 1974 to 1984.

Mr. Lawson: Revised figures for manufacturing output were issued on 13 February in the press notice on the index of the production industries for December 1984. The annual percentage changes in manufacturing output for 1974 to 1984 are as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1974	−1·2
1975	−6·9
1976	+1·9
1977	+2·0
1978	+0·5
1979	−0·2
1980	−8·8
1981	−6·1
1982	+0·6
1983	+2·5
1984	+3·3

Senior Police Officers (Pensions)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from police committees and federations about the possibility of taxation being imposed on lump sums received by senior police officers upon retirement.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

West Midlands

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total per annum of taxes paid by the west midlands region and by Wolverhampton; what sum

this represents per employed person; and what is the total of Government aid received by *(a)* the west midlands region and *(b)* Wolverhampton.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the capital gains tax rules which apply to assets disposed of in a series of transactions; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 December 1984, c. *326*]: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has become concerned at the increasing use of the practice known as bond washing, that is the conversion of income arising on fixed interest securities into capital form so that it is chargeable according to the rules of capital gains tax rather than those of income tax. This can be combined with the exemption from capital gains tax enjoyed by most fixed interest securities held for 12 months or more with the result that tax is being avoided on a large and rising scale. It is estimated that this practice is now costing the Exchequer about £300 million a year.

Accordingly my right hon. Friend has decided to take action to bring the tax advantages of bond washing to an end. The necessary legislation containing my right hon. Friend's proposals will be included in the forthcoming Finance Bill. It will take effect from 28 February 1986, but there will be provisions to limit forestalling and these will take effect from midnight last night.

This decision was announced before the market opened today so that the market could trade in full knowledge of the Government's intention, which affects the specific characteristics of gilt-edged securities. With my right hon. Friend's authority the Inland Revenue has issued a press notice giving fuller details. I have placed copies of the press notice in the Library.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish Government expenditure on housing per head of population in *(a)* Wales, and the comparable figures for *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1979-80;

(2) if he will publish Government expenditure on education per head of population in *(a)* Wales, and the comparable figures for *(b)* England and *(c)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his replies*, 14 February 1985, c. *291*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on 22 February at columns *608-18*.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the fall in the exchange rate since the end of 1981 has had on inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985 c. *494*]: It is impossible to quantify with any accuracy the effect on inflation of the fall in sterling since the end of 1981.

EC (Rebate)

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) at what stage under the Fontainebleau agreement it was anticipated that the United Kingdom would obtain its rebate by abatement of contribution;

(2) by what date he anticipates that the United Kingdom rebate will be obtained through abatement of contribution.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his replies*, 21 February 1985 c. *572*]: The Fontainebleau agreement makes clear that all future compensation to the United Kingdom will be through abatement of the United Kingdom's VAT contributions, when the agreement is implemented. The 1,000 mecu in respect of the 1984 financial year is due to be paid by the end of 1985. Agreement has not yet been reached by the Council of Ministers on the procedure and timing of implementation and rebated budgetary matters.

Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of revenue raised from taxation of benefits paid to the unemployed in 1984.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 February 1985 c. *571*]: The yield, in a full year at 1984-85 levels, from taxing benefits paid to the unemployed is estimated at about £625 million.

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form his estimate of the average monthly cost to the Exchequer when an adult male worker on average weekly earnings, (on the basis of all industry and services covered by the "New Earnings Survey", updated if appropriate by the average earnings index, and assuming pay was not affected by absence) becomes unemployed, showing separately *(a)* for single men and *(b)* for a married man with two children, one aged under five years and the other between five and 10 years, the following disbursements: (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) supplementary benefit, (iii) income tax rebate, (iv) rent and rate rebate, and the following losses of revenue, (v) from income tax, (vi) from taxes on consumption of goods and services, (vii) from employers' national insurance contributions and (viii) from employees' national insurance contribution.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 February 1985 c. *608*]: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 15 November 1984 at column *354*.

Company Taxation

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide a motive test in section 29 of the Finance Act 1973.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *211*]: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Employees (Company Shares)

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend section 79 of the Finance Act 1972 in relation to the acquisition by employees of shares in subsidiary companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *211*]: I have no plans to do so. The necessary purpose of section 79 of the Finance Act 1972 is to counter devices that might otherwise give employees extra remuneration free of income tax. Any company contemplating a scheme to which section 79 could be relevant may seek advice from the Inland Revenue.

European Community Budget

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the proportion of the EEC budget for each year since 1972, devoted to *(a)* compulsory and *(b)* non-compulsory expenditure; and what are the current guidelines in force as to the possible annual increase in expenditure in both categories.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *212-13*]: The figures requested are not available for the budget as adopted and could not be provided without disproportionate cost. Information relating to the 1984 financial year was provided on 10 January 1985 to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

The conclusions on budgetary discipline adopted by the Council of Ministers in December will apply in full to the 1986 budget. The principles of budgetary discipline also apply to the 1985 agricultural price-fixing as it will affect expenditure in 1986.

Commercial Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the money passed back to the private sector by the Bank of England through the purchase of commercial bills appears in any calculation or measure of growth in the money supply; what are the figures for that measure in every quarter since the beginning of 1979; and how either that measure or the amount spent on purchasing commercial bills compares with the amount of overfunding for each quarter over the same period;

(2) what is the estimated total of commercial bills *(a)* currently held by the Bank of England and *(b)* still in private hands;

(3) what has been the extent of overfunding for each quarter since the beginning of 1979; what has been the extent of the Bank of England's purchase of commercial bills for each quarter over the same period; and what effect these two factors have had on interest rates and monetary policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his replies*, 26 February 1985, c. *148*]: Purchases of commercial bills by the Bank of England are undertaken to offset factors which would otherwise cause a reduction in banker's balances at the Bank, a small component of MO. These transactions in commercial bills are between the Bank and the monetary sector, and therefore do not affect broad money. Banking month data for MO are given in the article on "Changes to monetary aggregates and the analysis of bank lending" in the March 1984 issue of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*.

Concerning figures for commercial bills and for overfunding I would refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave him on 16 November and 11 December 1984. Table 3.1 in the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* provides further information on acceptances outstanding. The relationship between overfunding and money market assistance is discussed in an article on "Funding PSBR" published in the December 1984 issue of the *B of England Quarterly Bulletin*.

The Bank's money market operations are designe prevent daily money market shortages from driving short term interest rates to an inappropriate level. The l of funding over this period has helped reduce the rat monetary growth.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer w rate of interest is currently charged by the Bank of Engl when it agrees to purchase commercial bills; and w information he has as to how this compares with the r of interest currently payable on bank deposits.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 Febru 1985, c. *148*]: The Bank of England's dealing rates commercial bills are published daily, as are the rate interest available on bank deposits.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequ there is any policy limit on the ability of the Bank England to purchase commercial bills.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 Febru 1985, c. *148*]: Policy is for the Bank of England to ope to relieve shortages in the money markets by purchas commercial bills and other methods in a way consis with control of the monetary aggregates.

Inflation

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequ what is the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 Febru 1985, c. *58*]: Over the 12 months to January 1985, retail prices index increased by 5 per cent.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security (Equality of Treatment)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services what training officers of his Department have h with regard to the implementation of the directive on eq treatment for men and women in social security matte

Mr. Whitney: The Department's officers ha instructions and guidance on the operation of the eq treatment provisions and officers dealing with supplem tary benefit, family income supplement and retirem pensions receive training on the provisions as part of th general training. Self instructional training was provid on the subject in autumn 1984 for officers concerned w the introduction and operation of severe disablem allowance, and is currently being prepared for offic dealing with sickness and invalidity benefits. The need further training is being kept under review.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services what steps are being taken by his Department ensure that married and cohabiting women are inform of the regulations under the directive on equal treatm for men and women in social security matters.

Mr. Whitney: Leaflet NI 248, "New ways of claimi for couples", setting out the equal treatment provisio was produced in November 1983. Claim forms and ot leaflets have been amended to refer to the provisions a

to leaflet NI 248 which is obtainable from local social security and unemployment benefit offices. A new edition of leaflet NI 248 is in hand.

Pensioners (Canada)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made with the Canadian Government in the implementation of a reciprocal agreement regarding British pensioners in Canada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Canadian Department of Health and Welfare has prepared a draft of a reciprocal agreement on social security providing, among other things, for pension increases for United Kingdom pensioners in Canada. The draft is now the subject of consideration by officials of this Department and their Canadian counterparts.

Implementation of any agreement will depend on the necessary finance becoming available. The cost of paying pension increases due after the agreement comes into effect is estimated at £2·5 million in the first year alone, rising progressively to about £35 million.

Heroin Abuse

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has held with *(a)* regional health authorities and *(b)* area health authorities concerning heroin abuse.

Mr. John Patten: We have received from regional health authorities interim reports, in response to DHSS circular HC(84) 14 of last June, about the prevalence of drug misuse and their plans for tackling the problem; the Department is following up all these reports with the authorities.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases his Department has rejected for unemployment benefit on the basis of declared part-time employment.

Mr. Whitney: As the Department of Employment administers unemployment benefit I, therefore, refer my hon. Friend to the reply given him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 5 February at column *493*.

Pensioners (Canada)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from Her Majesty's Government of Canada concerning the conclusion of a reciprocal social security agreement which would include payment of United Kingdom pensions to 41,000 British pensioners living in Canada; if he will estimate the increase in the cost to Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in pound sterling of such an agreement; and if he will provide a breakdown of this figure.

Mr. Whitney: Over the last 12 months representations from the Canadian Government on the conclusion of a reciprocal agreement to include paying pension increases to British pensioners living in Canada have been received from the former Minister of National Health and Welfare, the former Secretary of State for External Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, the present Minister of National Health and Welfare and the present Secretary of State for External Affairs. This issue was also raised at talks between the two Prime Ministers when they met in September 1983 on the occasion of my right hon. Friend's visit to Canada.

The cost to the United Kingdom of a comprehensive social security convention would arise almost entirely from paying higher pensions to British pensioners in Canada. The annual cost of increasing these pensions to current rates would be about £35 million; to pay future increases only would cost £2·5 million in the first year but the cost would rise each year to the same ultimate figure.

Sheffield Area Health Authority

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department will be writing to the Sheffield area health authority as agreed at their meeting on 16 November 1984 and promised for the Sheffield area health authority meeting in December 1984.

Mr. John Patten: Our officials will be meeting officers of Trent regional health authority and Sheffield health authority soon to discuss the proposals for development of services for mentally handicapped people in Sheffield.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place the attached notes of the auditors' accounts for Sheffield area health authority for the year ended 1984 in the Library, or otherwise make them available to hon. Members.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I assume the hon. Member has in mind the notes of discussions with senior officers of the Sheffield health authority to which the auditor refers, routinely, in his statutory report. These notes do not form part of the report but record discussions on a range of points for resolution, locally. In line with commonly accepted professional audit practice they are sent by the auditor to the senior officers following the close of the audit.

I would normally expect a health authority to make its statutory audit report available to the public but I would not normally regard it as necessary to collect them and place them in the Library. Discussions between auditors and officers arising from the audit are more useful if they remain confidential.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) by how much expenditure has increased each year on cash benefits for disabled people introduced by the previous Government; and what have been the savings on such expenditure since the link with earnings was removed;

(2) what has been the increase in real terms in spending on cash benefits for disabled people other than that on benefits introduced by the previous Government;

(3) what was the increase in real terms in spending on cash benefits for disabled people in each of the years 1973-74 to 1983-84.

Mr. Newton: Expenditure on cash benefits for long-term sick and disabled people from 1973-74 to 1983-84 was as follows:

Year	*Benefits introduced by the previous government 1974-79		†Other benefits	
	Cash £ million	At 1983-84 prices £ million	Cash £ million	At 1983-84 prices £ million
1973-74	—	—	570	2,000
1974-75	—	—	740	2,220
1975-76	12	29	990	2,370
1976-77	44	91	1,160	2,410
1977-78	67	122	1,400	2,560
1978-79	120	202	1,660	2,790
1979-80	168	244	1,930	2,800
1980-81	238	297	2,260	2,820
1981-82	309	346	2,650	2,970
1982-83	398	417	3,080	3,220
1983-84	496	496	3,570	3,570

* Invalid care allowance, mobility allowance and non-contributory invalidity pension.

† Attendance allowance, industrial disablement benefit, invalidity benefit and the appropriate share of expenditure on war pension, supplementary benefit, housing benefit and the Christmas bonus. All figures rounded because of the imprecision arising from the need to apportion expenditure on the latter four benefits. Estimates of the additional expenditure that would have resulted if the link with the increase of prices or earnings whichever was the greater had been maintained would involve making assumptions about forecasts, the treatment of forecasting errors and about which benefits had been uprated by this method, which would make such figures meaningless.

Disabled People's Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, in rank order according to the amount received, the disabled organisations currently receiving an annual grant from his Department, giving the level of grant for the last financial year and the number of years for which a grant has been paid; and, for the five organisations receiving the largest grants, if he will provide the following information *(a)* objectives and functions and *(b)* annual income.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested could only be given at disproportionate cost. I would however refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 22 June 1984 at columns *316-20* when I listed grants made to voluntary organisations in the financial year 1983-84. The list includes the disabled organisations and comparable information has been published in the *Official Report* for earlier years—for 1982-83 on 26 July 1983 at columns *1028-32* and for 1981-82 on 11 May 1982 at columns *588-92*.

Local Office Staffing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what contingency instructions his Department has given for essential staffing levels in local offices of his Department in the event of an emergency leading to the need to introduce power cuts.

Mr. Whitney: No specific contingency instructions have been issued.

In the event of power cuts, the staffing levels of local offices would remain at normal strength, and measures would be taken to supply alternative sources of heating and lighting where necessary. It would be the responsibil a local office manager to decide on priorities i effectiveness of his office was impaired.

Heart Surgery

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for S Services how many patients are awaiting heart surge each health authority region in England; what i average waiting period in each region; and if he will a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information i available centrally.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Stat Social Services what special provisions he intends to for health authorities requiring resources for exped treatment for patients on waiting lists needing open surgery.

Mr. John Patten: The provision of services patients needing open heart surgery is a matter for h authorities. We have asked health authorities to dev coronary artery surgery as a priority within the sector, but it is for health authorities to fund developments from within their financial allocations

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State Social Services what additional resources he intend provide for Guy's hospital for adults and babies awa heart surgery.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: South-East Thames regi health authority has four units for cardiac surgery adults at Guy's, Kings, St Thomas' and the B hospitals. More facilities are provided for cardiac sur in the south-east than in any other part of the countr is for the health authorities to divide the work load resources between these units which tend to compete each other and with other services.

We look to the regional health authority and Lewis and North Southwark health authority to resolve present overspending problems in the cardiothoracic at Guy's with the minimum effects on patient care.

Cardiac surgery for babies under one year is design as a supra-regional service and Guy's hospital is one of designated national centres. £952,000 has been prote within the South-East Thames region's allocation for provision of this service during 1985-86.

Ministers cannot provide additional funds to indivi units in individual hospitals in response to short-term much publicised local problems. It would not be sens or fair to finance the Health Service on this basis.

Benefits

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State Social Services if he has any plans to reduce benefits p out to social security claimants in respect of Christ bonuses and heating allowances.

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Member knows, the so security system is under review at present and I do intend to anticipate the announcement of the outcom the review.

Mental Health Act Commission

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the findings from the Mental Health Act Commission's report on its code of practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Mental Health Act Commission is, at our request, preparing a draft of the code of practice provided for in section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983, on the admission of patients under the Act and the treatment of patients suffering from mental disorder. I understand the Commission expects to submit its draft to us by the end of March. We shall then, as required by section 118, consult interested bodies, lay the code before Parliament for approval and publish it.

Psychosurgery

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of psychosurgical operations performed in hospitals in England and Wales in each of the last five years; and if he will list them by type.

Mr. John Patten: The available information on numbers of operations is given in the table. Details of the specific type of operation performed are not collected centrally.

Psychosurgery operations performed in NHS hospitals in England and Wales

Year	Number
1979	70
1980	62
1981	59
1982	38
1983	37

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many amygdalectmies have been performed in hospitals in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally.

Guardianship Orders

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of guardianship orders invoked under the terms of section 7 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows: 30 new guardianship orders under section 7 of the Mental Health Act 1983 were made in the period 30 September 1983 to 31 March 1984. Later figures are not yet available.

Drugs Manufacturers (Inducements)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *71-2*, (1) if he will itemise the admissible expenses for which general practitioners are eligible and, for each expense, give the average sum received by individual general practitioners and the total cost of such expenses to the National Health Service;

(2) what is the net income paid on average to a general practitioner and the total cost to the National Health Service of the income of all general practitioners within the service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The remuneration arrangements for general medical practitioners are designed to reimburse to the profession as a whole the costs they incur providing general medical services. Data on actual expenses are not known until three years after they have been incurred.

Some expenses are reimbursed directly to the doctors incurring them; the remainder are reimbursed indirectly on an average basis through fees and allowances. In the last financial year 1983-84 directly reimbursed expenses are estimated to have been £10,207 per doctor. The review body concluded that £9,290 per doctor should be reimbursed indirectly through fees and allowances in that year. The intended average net income was £20,160 from 1 April 1983 and £20,670 from 1 January 1984. Total expenditure in Great Britain in 1983-84 on general medical services including payments for drugs supplied by dispensing doctors was £1,099·572 million.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 25 February , *Official Report*, column *71-2*, (1) if any savings on the adjustment of reimbursement prices paid to dispensing doctors will be made to the National Health Service;

(2) over what period of time and for how long dispensing doctors have been obtaining discounts on drugs costs from wholesalers and manufacturers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *71-2*, where and how companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme advertise National Health Service medicines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this detailed information. Advertisements for medicines prescribed under the National Health Service are placed mainly in medical journals and professional magazines. Literature is also sent to doctors by post and through sales representatives.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, whether he has any information as to the manner in which representatives of companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme are remunerated in respect of the sales of National Health Service medicines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, whether he has received any representations at any time from companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme that expenditure on gifts or similar inducements should be an admissible expense under the scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the operation of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The non-statutory agreement embodied in the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme is designed to control the prices and profits, and the costs incurred in production and distribution, of National Health Service medicines. The scheme is reviewed from time to time as necessary.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what expenses are admissible expenses in the pricing of National Health Service medicines by companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and if he will itemise the same giving the value of the expense in each case for the last full year in which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to our Department being satisfied as to their reasonableness, all the usual costs of manufacture, research, distribution, and so on are treated as admissible expenses in the pricing of medicines under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. In 1982, expenses as returned by the large companies (with sales exceeding £2 million to the National Health Service) before adjustments made by our Department were:

	£ million
Manufacturing	510·0
Distribution	42·7
Information	12·0
Sales Promotion	155·8
Royalties	23·0
Administration	153·9
Research and Development	218·3

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the National Health Service drugs bill is represented by sales promotion by companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sales promotion expenditure is controlled by an ad hoc formula the purpose of which is to limit admissible expenses to 10 per cent. of the value of the industry's sales to the National Health Service. From 1 April this limit will be reduced to 9 per cent.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has information that companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme offered gifts or similar inducements to general practitioners to persuade them to prescribe particular drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no specific information on the gifts or other inducements offered by pharmaceutical companies to general practitioners.

On the general matter of inducements and gifts I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) on 9 January at column *497*.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the National Health Service drugs bill for 1982; and what proportion of that was represented by sales promotion expenditure expended by companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and what are the anticipated figures for 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The annual financial returns for 1982 from companies within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme having individual sales to the National Health Service of £2 million or more showed total sales (United Kingdom) of £1,269 million. While expenditure on sales promotion as declared b companies was £155·8 million, the amount allowed admissible expense was reduced to some 10 per ce the sales total. We cannot at this stage estima corresponding figures for the 1985 returns. Howev are reducing the sales promotion allowance to 9 pe from 1 April.

NHS (Drugs)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Services what is the value on average of National Service drugs prescribed in the last full year for figures are available by *(a)* dispensing doctors a general practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let my hon. Friend a reply as soon as possible.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Services whether he is now in a position to advise authorities on policy regarding residential accommo in the light of the recent Rayner scrutiny.

Mr. John Patten: We expect to mak announcement within the next few weeks. In meantime, we hope authorities will continue to se properties that they identify as surplus to requirem and use the proceeds to develop services for patient

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Services if he will make available the comments of h authorities to the recent Scrutiny Report on resid accommodation for National Health Service worker

Mr. John Patten: We are expecting to mak announcement within the next few weeks which will into account the comments received from h authorities and from other bodies.

Specialist Claims Control Unit

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for S Services what areas were visited by the special cl control unit in Scotland in 1984; what conclusions reached; and when the unit next will visit the constitu of Edinburgh, Leith.

Mr. Whitney: The following local offices in Sco were visited by specialist claims control teams in 19

Arbroath		Cowdenbeath	I
	Glasgow (Maryhill)	Cumbernauld	John
Aberdeen (North)		Dumbarton	Kilmar
	Glasgow (Parkhead)	Dumfries	Kirk
Aberdeen (South)		Dundee (West)	Mothe
	Glasgow (Partick)	Edinburgh (East)	
Airdrie		Edinburgh (South)	Pa
	Glasgow (Queens Park)	Elgin	
Bathgate		Falkirk	Peter
	Glasgow (Southside)	Fort William	St
Campbeltown		Glasgow (Anniesland)	
	Glasgow (Springburn)		Stra
Coatbridge	Inverness	Glasgow (Laurieston)	

Benefit was adjusted in 1,001 of the 2,622 cases examined. There are no plans to visit the local office at Edinburgh (North), which covers Leith, during the course of the present programme which runs until the end of April.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether paragraph 23 of volume 1 of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88", about increases in social security spending, covers child benefit.

Mr. Whitney: Yes.

Ancillary Services (Contractors)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list all those district health authorities with which he or his Department have had discussions or correspondence with regard to the awarding of in-house contracts for laundry, cleaning and catering services;

(2) if he will list all those companies known to be operating private contracts within the National Health Service indicating the services offered.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Health Service Contractors (VAT)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of value added tax so far refunded to his Department's district health authorities as a result of their using commercial contractors for laundry, catering and cleaning services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list all instances known to his Department of health authorities wholly or partly determining private contracts for catering, cleaning and laundry services;

(2) if he will list all instances known to his Department of district health authorities partly or wholly rescinding contracts with private companies for laundry, catering and cleaning services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not aware of any instance of a district health authority rescinding a contract with a private company since our circular on competitive tendering was issued in September 1983.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of money paid in default of contract so far paid by private contractors to district health authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those district health authorities which have, to date, included conditions relating to wage levels when contracting out catering, cleaning and laundry services to the private sector.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Some health authorities were proposing to specify wage levels for contractors' staff but we informed them in October 1984 that it is quite wrong to interfere in this way in the relationship between a contractor and his employees. We are not aware how many health authorities who have let contracts included such conditions but none should have done so.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those district health authorities which have so far failed to submit programmes for competitive tendering for hospital catering, cleaning and laundry services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following district health authorities have failed so far to submit competitive tendering programmes to our Department:

Brent
Greenwich
Lewisham and North Southwark
Coventry
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
Sandwell
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Salford
South Manchester
West Lancashire

We have made it quite clear to these authorities that we expect them to submit programmes in the near future and that we take a serious view of any failure to test and demonstrate the cost effectiveness of their support services. None of these authorities would find difficulty in spending savings from support service costs on improvements in patient care.

Bolton Hospital

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the development of the new Bolton hospital, giving the dates and financial support for the first stage of the new hospital.

Mr. John Patten: North-Western regional health authority received the second highest capital allocation in England. In the next few months it will be announcing when work is to begin on the redevelopment of Bolton general hospital.

Mental Health (Urgent Treatment)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any patient has received treatment under section 62 of the Mental Health Act 1983 with favourable irreversible physical or psychological consequences, or entailing significant psychological hazard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There is no statutory requirement for action taken under section 62 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to be recorded or reported. The Mental Health Act Commission are, however, monitoring the implementation of the Act closely, particularly as regards matters relating to consent to treatment, and no such case has come to their notice or to ours.

If the hon. Member would care to let me have details of any specific matter which he believes may give cause for concern, I shall be glad to look into it.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make available information on how the calculations were made which underlie his conclusion that £75 million can be saved during the financial year 1985-86 by introducing the limited list of drugs from 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to make the details of these calculations available because information about the prescribing volume and cost of individual drugs is of commercial value and it is not the practice to divulge it. £75 million is the best estimate by our officials of the savings that will be made in the hospital and family practitioner services in the United Kingdom. This figure will rise significantly in the near future as generic alternatives become available for some of the branded products on our selected list.

NHS (Spectacles)

Mrs. Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the new arrangements to assist the visually handicapped and those needing complex prescriptions who will be unable to pay for the glasses they need will be introduced by 1 April when these aids cease to be available on the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regulations will be laid within the next few days dealing with entitlement and other provisions under the general ophthalmic services from 1 April.

The general range of optical appliances will continue to be available without charge to children and to people entitled to full remission of charges, and at reduced charge to those entitled to partial remission on income grounds.

A defined range of complex lenses will be available, at a charge which reflects full economic costs, to the visually handicapped and others who do not qualify for full or partial remission of charges.

The present arrangements for dispensing optical appliances through the hospital eye service will continue.

Appointments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those bodies to which he appoints members.

Mr. Fowler: I refer the hon. Member to the Cabinet Office (MPO) booklet "Public Bodies 1984", published on 18 December last year, copies of which are in the Library. I also appoint members to Whitley Councils for the Health Services (Great Britain), to the Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council and to the joint negotiating committee for professions allied to medicine.

Head Lice

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to local education authorities about the educational aspects of policy on the detection, control and treatment in schools of head lice in schoolchildren.

Mr. John Patten: The control of head lice amongst school children is primarily the responsibility of health authorities through the school health services. The Health Education Council, which is funded by this D has produced two pamphlets, for paren professionals, on this subject; both of these a to local education authorities.

Disabled People (Survey)

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of Stat Services if he will make a statement on the pro new full-scale survey of disabled people.

Mr. Newton: The survey is being condu Office of Population Censuses and Surv experience and expertise in this field acknowledged. Following OPCS's extensive and our Department's wide consultation wit organisations—to whom we are very gratef help—the main stage of the survey begins o This involves delivery of a short questionnaire addresses to identify samples of disabled children in the community to be interviewed f November this year. Next year the survey will to disabled people in institutions.

The main purpose of the survey is to obtai and comprehensive information about the disabled people, their circumstances and t Information of this kind is essential if we are t use of available resources for services and be reflect the needs of disabled people.

Mr. Ernest Trevor Smout

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary o Social Services when he expects the appeal by Trevor Smout, of Newtown, to be heard by t appeal tribunal; and if he will take steps to redu between the notification and hearing of appea

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 Feb c. *393*]: A statement of his case was sent to Mr 12 February 1985 and the Department is requi to allow him 28 days to respond. If no furth required as a result of comments by Mr. Smo will be passed immediately to the Lord C Department to arrange the hearing. We would to take approximately three months.

The Department has for some time been about the increase in the time it is taking to pension appeals to a hearing. The process pr law and the general need to obtain further evi hospitals and consultants necessarily make the of an appeal for hearing lengthy. Unfortunatel been a shortage of suitably experienced doct type of work and considerable arrears of appeal built up, adding to the processing time. Ther some recent improvement in the arrears situa Pensions as a whole but the effect on the mo appeals work will be gradual.

Secure Accommodation

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State Services if he will take steps to introduce long-t accommodation for persons not suffering fr illness as defined by law but who nonetheles secure and sheltered environment for their own that of others.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *137*]: The 1983 Mental Health Act specifies the circumstances in which a person may, on account of mental disorder, be compulsorily detained—where that is necessary for the health or safety of the person concerned or for the protection of other persons. A person not liable to detention under the provisions of the Mental Health Act may be admitted on an informal basis to a National Health Service hospital, whether or not the doctor concerned regards the patient's problems as constituting mental illness, if in his clinical judgment such an admission may be beneficial. Such treatment may involve some element of security, but the person concerned would be free to leave the hospital at any time. A number of NHS hospitals do have a "special care" ward providing structured environment and high level of supervision without relying on detention. Certain voluntary bodies cater for people with behavioural problems who are not mentally ill and are better cared for outside hospital. Parliament has not provided for the compulsory detention in hospital of someone who is not detainable under the Mental Health Act. Such a person cannot be detained except as a result of a judgment by a court.

We are reviewing the needs of, and provision and plans for "hard to place" clients, including those who are mentally handicapped.

Maternity Services Liaison Committees

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those district and regional health authorities which have so far not appointed non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees;

(2) what steps he intends to take to ensure that district health authorities appoint non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees;

(3) if he will set a deadline by which time district health authorities must have appointed non-medical members to their maternity services liaison committees.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *220*]: The Maternity Services Advisory Committee strongly recommended that every district health authority should establish and maintain a maternity services liaison committee to help implement, in the light of local circumstances, the MSAC's advice on good practice. The committee should act as a multi-disciplinary forum, reaching agreement between the different professionals — midwives, nurses, and doctors — and drawing on the experience of users of the maternity services. The MSAC suggested that such a committee might wish to meet in two forms: as a professional group when clinical and confidential matters were to be discussed, and with a wider membership including lay people for all other purposes.

We have asked health authorities who have not already set up such committees to consider doing so, and we will be monitoring action taken on this, and other advice contained in the MSAC's three reports, through the accountability review process. Decisions on membership are for health authorities to take. We do not currently hold centrally information on how many committees have been established or on their composition.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those district health authorities which have either ceased or reduced expenditure on private contract services for laundry, catering and cleaning for each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of health authorities for 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Expenditure figures for the two years are not entirely comparable as value added tax on these services became reclaimable with effect from 1 September 1983.

We do not hold information by districts for earlier years (that is prior to National Health Service restructuring).

a. Ceased use of private contracts

Catering
- South Tees
- North Tyneside
- Southern Derbyshire
- Leicestershire
- Nottingham
- Rotherham
- Barnet
- West Essex
- East Berkshire
- Worcester
- Macclesfield
- Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde

Domestic/Cleaning
- Nil

Laundry
- Wakefield
- Doncaster
- West Norfolk and Wisbech
- Southport and Formby

b. Reduced expenditure on private contracts

Catering
- West Cumbria
- Sunderland
- Central Nottinghamshire
- Barnsley
- Newham
- Hastings
- Lewisham and North Southwark
- Worthing
- Oxfordshire
- Southmead
- Exeter
- Somerset
- North Warwickshire
- South Birmingham
- North Birmingham
- South Sefton

Domestic/Cleaning
- Hartlepool
- South Tees
- Darlington
- South West Durham
- Gateshead
- South Tyneside
- Scunthorpe
- Scarborough
- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Huddersfield
- Dewsbury
- Leeds Eastern
- Leicestershire
- North Lincolnshire
- South Lincolnshire
- Bassetlaw
- Central Nottinghamshire

Barnsley
Doncaster
Sheffield
Great Yarmouth
West Norfolk and Wisbech
East Hertfordshire
Barnet
Harrow
Ealing
Brent
Paddington
Hammersmith and Fulham
Victoria
Basildon and Thurrock
Mid Essex
Southend
Bloomsbury
Islington
Newham
Tower Hamlets
Haringey
Redbridge
Waltham Forest
Brighton
Eastbourne
Canterbury and Thanet
Dartford and Gravesham
Tunbridge Wells
Bexley
Camberwell
Lewisham and North Southwark
North West Surrey
Mid-Surrey
East Surrey
Croydon
Kingston and Esher
Wandsworth
Sutton and Merton
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Winchester
Basingstoke and North Hampshire
Salisbury
Bath
East Berkshire
West Berkshire
Aylesbury
Oxfordshire
Bristol and Weston
Frenchay
Cornwall
Plymouth
Torbay
Cheltenham
Gloucester
Bromsgrove and Redditch
Hereford
Kidderminster
Worcester
Shropshire
North-Staffordshire
North Warwickshire
South Warwickshire
Central Birmingham
North Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Chester
Crewe
Halton
Macclesfield
Liverpool
Lancaster
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
Preston
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale
Bury
North Manchester
South Manchester
Rochdale
Salford
Tameside and Glossop
Trafford
Wigan

Laundry
North Tees
East Cumbria
Durham
North West Durham
South West Durham
Northumberland
Newcastle upon Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Hull
East Yorkshire
Northallerton
York
Bradford
Airedale
Calderdale
Leeds Western
Pontefract
North Derbyshire
South Derbyshire
Leicestershire
North Lincolnshire
South Lincolnshire
Central Nottinghamshire
Nottingham
Barnsley
Rotherham
Sheffield
East Suffolk
Norwich
North Bedfordshire
South Bedfordshire
North Hertfordshire
Barnet
Harrow
Hillingdon
Hounslow and Spelthorne
Brent
Paddington
Hammersmith and Fulham
Victoria
Mid-Essex
West Essex
Southend
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Bloomsbury
Islington
Newham
Haringey
Redbridge
Waltham Forest
Brighton
Eastbourne
South East Kent
Medway
Tunbridge Wells
Bexley
Greenwich
Bromley
Lewisham and North Southwark
South West Surrey
Mid-Surrey
Mid-Downs
Wandsworth
West Dorset
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Basingstoke and North Hampshire
Salisbury
Bath

Isle of Wight
West Berkshire
Aylesbury
Milton Keynes
Kettering
Northampton
Bristol and Weston
Southmead
Cornwall
Exeter
Plymouth
Torbay
Cheltenham
Gloucester
Kidderminster
Shropshire
Mid-Staffordshire
North Staffordshire
Rugby
South Warwickshire
East Birmingham
South Birmingham
West Birmingham
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Chester
Halton
Macclesfield
Warrington
Liverpool
St. Helens and Knowsley
South Sefton
Lancaster
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
Preston
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale
West Lancashire
Chorley and South Ribble
Central Manchester
South Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport

SCOTLAND

Shellfish

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the value of commercial landings of oysters and of all other shellfish for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by postal code district, the latest unemployment figures within the Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy travel-to-work areas; and if he will show for each postal code district the change in unemployment over the preceding 12-month period.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not at present available for the revised travel-to-work areas. The table shows the estimated number of unemployed claimants by post-code sector in the former Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy TTWAs at 10 January 1985 and the change over the preceding 12 months.

	Estimated number of unemployed claimants at 10.1.85	*Change over 12.1.84*
Dunfermline TTWA		
KY 4 0	476	38
KY 4 8	388	43
KY 4 9	659	113
KY 5 0	627	16
KY 5 8	764	123
KY 5 9	506	85
KY13 7	379	79
KY11 1	461	87
KY11 2	641	90
KY11 3	193	38
KY11 4	1,101	82
KY11 5	372	40
KY12 0	406	21
KY12 7	203	36
KY12 8	531	15
KY29 9	616	59
Total	8,323	965
Kirkcaldy TTWA		
KY 6 1	445	40
KY 6 2	716	34
KY 6 3	273	44
KY 7 4	690	−2
KY 7 5	321	−13
KY 7 6	622	66
KY 1 1	419	22
KY 1 2	617	64
KY 1 3	476	52
KY 2 5	651	−21
KY 2 6	1,236	−25
KY 3 0	258	−11
KY 3 9	317	38
KY 1 4	297	7
KY 8 1	425	11
KY 8 2	619	−19
KY 8 3	559	30
KY 8 4	473	47
KY 8 5	770	−73
KY 8 6	104	14
Total	10,288	305

Note: Dunfermline travel-to-work area (TTWA) comprised the jobcentre areas of Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline. Kirkcaldy TTWA comprised the jobcentre areas of Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Leven.

Psychosurgical Operations

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of psychosurgical operations performed in Scottish hospitals in each of the last five years; and if he will define them by type.

Mr. John MacKay: Psychosurgery is performed very infrequently in Scotland and is not recorded as such in the Scottish hospital inpatient statistics. Information is, however, collated on operations involving division of the brain tissue and, by counting separately the numbers of such operations where there is also a diagnosis of mental disorder, it is possible to derive a number of operations which may be assumed to fall within the category of psychosurgery, though no information is available by type of psychosurgery. In the last five years for which figures are available, the number of such operations is as follows:

	number
1978	2
1979	1
1980	2
1981	1
1982	1

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many amidalaectomies have been performed in Scottish hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: I assume that the hon. Gentleman has in mind amygdalotomy which is a rare form of psychosurgery. It is not possible to differentiate this operation from other operations involving the division of brain tissue, and no statistics on the number of amygdalotomy are available centrally.

Guardianship Orders

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of guardianship orders invoked under the terms of section 37 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: Six such orders have been recorded by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland since the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 came into operation on 30 September 1984.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has assessed the compulsory redundancies in the agricultural colleges in Scotland if his proposed cuts in the agricultural services for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are implemented and the effect this would have in the rural areas.

Mr. John MacKay: The staffing implications of the planned reduction in funding depend on the outcome of current discussions with the Scottish agricultural colleges about ways in which they might accommodate reduced levels of funding in the years in question, and on the nature and extent of the contribution towards the cost of these services from those who benefit from them.

Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what detailed consultation he has had with the National Farmers Union of Scotland on the analysis of the arrangements for agricultural advisory services in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has been in correspondence with the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland about the arrangements for agricultural advisory services in Scotland. The matter will be discussed at a meeting on 4 March between the union and officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has arranged to discuss it further with a union delegation on 22 March.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the consequences on the farming industry of the £3·4 million reduction for Scotland's agricultural advisory services in the rural areas for the years 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: It is the Government's aim that those who benefit from the agricultural advisory services should make some contribution towards their cost. The planned reduction in public funding in 1987-88 is therefore directed towards maintaining a strong and active service in future, financed jointly by Government and the industry itself. My officials are currently in discussion with the agricultural colleges which provide these services in Scotland to determine how best these changes may be made over the next two years.

Farm Incomes

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures for the decline in farm incomes in Scotland over the past 10 years compared with the remainder of the United Kingdom.

Mr. John MacKay: Estimated aggregate farming income in Scotland and in the United Kingdom as a whole has fluctuated, as shown in the table below, over the past 10 years. In real terms there has been a decline of 60 per cent. in Scotland and nearly 30 per cent. in the United Kingdom over the period, although the number of farmers sharing in these aggregates has also declined.

Farming Income

£ million

	Scotland	*United Kingdom*
1974	110	792
1975	124	994
1976	199	1,283
1977	170	1,263
1978	116	1,255
1979	77	1,147
1980	30	1,047
1981	85	1,353
1982	140	1,801
1983	107	1,502
1984	141	1,826

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the reasons for the delay in the payment of hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1985 to the Scottish farming industry.

Mr. John MacKay: Payment of this year's hill livestock compensatory allowances commenced on 22 February, 12 days later than in 1984.

This year saw the introduction of six new rates of compensatory allowance, two in the new marginal land areas and four in the Highlands and Islands Development Board area. These, together with their associated payment limitations, necessitated considerable administrative changes, including alterations in the computer programs by means of which the payments are calculated and issued.

Despite starting 12 days later than last year, I am pleased to be able to say that, by Tuesday, 26 February, 5,358 payments had been issued compared with 5,636 payments by the end of February last year.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if arrangements, similar to those announced on 21 February regarding dispensing doctors in rural areas in the

context of the proposed limited list, *Official Report*, column 1224, will apply in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: In his statement on 21 February my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services indicated that regulations on the subject of limited lists prescribing would also be introduced for Scotland. The Scottish regulations will make similar provision to those for England and Wales, including the provisions relating to dispensing doctors.

Property Revaluation

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now prepared to postpone the 1985 revaluation of property.

Mr. Younger: No. The substantial task of revaluing every property in Scotland has now been completed; new valuation rolls are in the possession of rating authorities; and new valuation notices are, or very shortly will be, going out to every ratepayer in the country. I have no power to cancel the revaluation, and to make a—necessarily cumbersome and complex—attempt to delay its implementation would be unfair and undesirable.

Dangerous Materials

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to amend the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 to prevent warehouses storing non-hazardous materials being converted without planning consent to store dangerous materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: On 31 July last year we issued a consultation paper stating our intention to introduce legislation to provide that no building or other land shall be used, without the written consent of the planning authority, for any purpose which involves the manufacture, processing, keeping or use of a hazardous substance in such circumstances as will result in there being at any one time a specified quantity of such a substance in, on, over or under the land. It is our intention that legislation to this effect should be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what pesticides cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme there is no available data, or none was submitted to obtain clearance, on *(a)* carcinogenicity, *(b)* mutagenicity and *(c)* teratogenicity.

Mr. MacGregor: Data on all three elements must be submitted before a pesticide can be cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme.

Departments will assess the need for new data when they review existing clearances under the proposed statutory scheme where clearances granted many years ago may not meet current standards in this respect.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the presumed level of reporting of incidents involving toxic effects of pesticides on wildlife.

Mrs. Fenner: While my Department has no way of measuring the proportion of all incidents that are reported I am confident that significant incidents are generally brought to our attention.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the people currently involved in advising farmers on the need to apply pesticides, particularly in the commercial sector, have training in the recognition of pest problems and the assessment of their severity.

Mrs. Fenner: The most popular source of advice for farmers on the use of pesticides is the agrochemical merchants' representative.

Member companies of both the British agrochemical supply industry scheme and the British Agrochemicals Association require all staff who give advice on the use of pesticides to attend formal training courses and to attain a specified degree of competence. These organisations cover by far the major proportion of the trade.

Specialist advice is also available to farmers and growers from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Agricultural Products (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 on milk and milk products under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget broken down into export refunds, storage, aids, and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 on different meats under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget broken down into export refunds, storage, aids, and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983;

(3) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 on sugar and sugar beet under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget broken down into export refunds, storage, aids, and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide corresponding figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983 together with the receipts from levies on the manufacture or sale of sugar substitutes;

(4) whether he will provide in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 on the different vegetable oils and protein plants under the guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget broken down into export refunds, storage, aids and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983;

(5) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 on cereals under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget broken down by type of cereal and in each case into export refunds, storage, aids and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983;

(6) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1984 estimated expenditure under the guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget on wine, tobacco and other products listed under the same budget heading broken down into export refunds, storage costs, aids and so on, compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983;

(7) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated expenditure in 1984 under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the European Economic Community budget on the different fruits and vegetables compared with the amount appropriated; if he will break these figures down into expenditure on export refunds, storage, destruction, aid and so on; and if he will provide similar figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him earlier today.

Butter (Intervention Price)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the United Kingdom intervention price of a tonne of butter in 1984 compares with the price paid for the milk which was used in making it; and what was the average price received for butter disposed of in third markets by means of export refunds.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1984 the intervention price of butter (80 per cent. fat) was 3491·28 ecu/tonne (£2159·90/tonne) from 1 January 1984 to 1 April 1984 and 3119·0 ecu/tonne (£1929·58/tonne) from 2 April 1984 to 31 December 1984. The average price for milk for manufacture into butter in 1983-84 was 14·085 pence per litre of whole milk comprising of both butterfat and skim elements. Prices received for butter disposed of in third country markets are a matter for commercial negotiation. However the intervention price net of the export refund and United Kingdom monetary compensatory amount applicable on 22 February 1985 would indicate a price of around £1200/tonne.

Rape Seed

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums were paid by the intervention board for agricultural produce or any other public authority in 1984 to support the growing of rape seed; and if he will provide separate figures for storage, storage aid, export subsidies and so on, together with a comparison for 1970 and 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: Provisional expenditure figures for direct support for rape seed growing in 1984 are £64,068,550 for the production aid and £1,310 for export refunds. Comparable figures for 1979 were £20,049,352 and £441 respectively. No support buying was undertaken in 1984. In 1979 payments for purchases into intervention amounted to £292,387 and for storage to £5,162. No payments to support the growing of rapeseed were made in 1970.

Farm Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the years 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1979 to 1984 the proportion of farm output accounted for by crops, livestock, livestock products and horticulture, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as follows; only crop year estimates are available for 1955 and 1965.

Distribution of Agricultural Output

	1955-56	*1965-66*	*1975*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984 F/C*
Crops									
£ million	254	381	1,115	1,894	2,120	2,449	3,009	2,977	3,541
Per cent.	19	20	22	23	24	25	28	27	30
Livestock									
£ million	432	673	1,918	3,043	3,288	3,529	3,798	4,020	4,258
Per cent.	33	36	39	38	37	37	35	36	36
Livestock products									
£ million	496	600	1,388	2,276	2,500	2,678	2,969	3,046	2,893
Per cent.	37	32	28	28	28	28	28	27	24
Horticulture									
£ million	142	208	557	854	913	962	1,012	1,150	1,241
Per cent.	11	11	11	11	10	10	9	10	10
Total									
£ million	1,324	1,862	4,978	8,067	8,821	9,618	10,788	11,193	11,933
Per cent.	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Annual review of agriculture White Paper.

Grain

Miss Maynard asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of grain stored in the European Economic Community on 30 November 1984; and what is the cost of storing such grain per day.

Mr. MacGregor: The value of cereals in intervention storage in the European Community on 30 November 1984 was 1949 mecu, applying the prices per tonne set out in the annex to Commission Regulation (EEC) 3248/84. Storage costs vary between member states and are not available.

Lupin Seed

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate for expenditure under the common agricultural policy for growing lupin seed in the current crop year; and whether he expects it to increase as rapidly in future years as expenditure on the production of rape seed.

Mr. MacGregor: In its preliminary draft, the Commission forecast that expenditure on the aid scheme for incorporating lupins into animal feed will total about 3 mecu in 1985. It would be premature to assess likely expenditure in future years, which will depend among other things on the progress of development work on new and improved varieties.

"Trade Patterns"

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date tables 1-6 in the memorandum on United Kingdom trade patterns submitted by his Department to the European Community Committee of the House of Lords published in its seventh report of Session 1983-84 on "Trade Patterns".

Mr. MacGregor: Tables 1-6 referred to were based on information available in the "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", the latest volumes of which are in the Library of the House.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting held on 25-26 February.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made in the House earlier today.

Oysters and Shellfish

Sir John Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the value of commercial landings of oysters and of all other shellfish for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: Difficulties in collecting complete statistics on shellfish landings mean that available figures may significantly under-estimate the total landings in some instances. The available information is as follows:

Value of United Kingdom Landings by United Kingdom Vessels

(£'000)

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Oysters	1,009	1,001	1,116	925	636
Cockles	504	807	592	458	327
Crabs	3,906	3,968	4,258	4,246	6,373
Lobsters	4,130	3,348	3,881	4,251	5,744
Mussels	271	460	229	461	468
Nephrops	22,114	14,924	16,593	21,289	24,054
Periwinkles	747	801	787	775	864
Queens	1,335	1,379	1,933	1,291	2,091
Scallops	3,861	5,537	5,374	5,830	6,116
Shrimps	979	998	1,097	1,147	2,498
Squids	355	433	615	1,126	953
Whelks	261	259	351	380	226
Other shellfish	386	309	328	316	667
Total shellfish	39,858	34,224	37,154	42,495	51,017

Sheepmeat

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total amount collected, and the average per pound of meat, in respect of the export charge on sheepmeat in each year since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *583*]: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Amount collected £*	*Average p/lb*
1980	NIL	NIL
1981	10,409,031	15·3
1982	6,862,009	16·6
1983	21,069,388	24·5
1984	21,859,045	22·1

Agricultural Production (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each member state the amount spent under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section in 1983 compared with 1972 and 1979 together with the estimate for 1984; and if he will break the total down *(a)* by product and *(b)* by export refunds, storage aids and so on.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *584*]:

Information on the amounts appropriated for the Guarantee Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund may be obtained from the Community budgets for the years in question as published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The relevant documents have been deposited in the House of Commons Library under the following references:

1972 Budget—OJ. L202 of 4.9.72

1972 Budget (Supplementary No. 2)—OJ. L287 of 26.12.72

1979 Budget—OJ. L23 of 31.1.79

1979 Budget (Supplementary No. 3)—OJ. L41 of 18.2.80

1983 Budget—OJ L19 of 24.1.83

1983 Budget (Supplementary No. 2)—OJ. L331 of 28.11.83

1984 Budget—OJ. L12 of 16.1.84

1984 Budget (Supplementary No. 1)—OJ. L329 of 17.12.84

Information on actual expenditure from the Guarantee Section and receipts of sugar levies for 1972, 1979 and 1983 is set out in the EC Commission's EAGGF Financial Reports which have been deposited in the House of Commons Library under the following references:

1972 EAGGF Report—R/731/74 of 20.3.74
1979 EAGGF Report (Guarantee) — 11488/80 of 19.11.80
1983 EAGGF Report (Guarantee)—9372/84 of 26.9.84
The 1984 report is not yet available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated expenditure for each of the principal products under the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fu guarantee scheme in 1984 compared with the amou appropriated: and if he will provide corresponding figu for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 198 c. *584*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave h earlier today.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 1 March 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judges

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor has any plans to review the arrangements for allocating judges to specific criminal cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The allocation of judges to specific criminal cases is the responsibility of the judiciary. It should remain so.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Attorney-General what steps he has taken to recruit staff for the local offices of the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Attorney-General: Until the Prosecution of Offences Bill has received Royal Assent it is not possible to recruit staff for local offices of the Crown Prosecution Service. I have, therefore, taken no steps to do so. Ther are, however, six counties in England and Wales (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Leicestershire, North Yorkshire and Staffordshire) which currently do not have prosecuting solicitors' departments of their own. The Director of Public Prosecutions intends to set up local offices of his Department in these areas during 1985 and the Civil Service Commission is currently running an open competition for the head of office post in the first of these (the Hertfordshire district). These offices can be expected to form the basis for the district office of the Crown Prosecution Service when it comes into existence.

Legal Aid

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General how many applications have been made for legal aid in each of the last five years; how many were granted; and how many refused.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:

Civil Legal Aid Applications

Financial year	*Made*	*Approved*	*Refused*
1979-80	293,343	213,305	19,647
1980-81	258,099	194,792	19,703
1981-82	266,596	190,558	21,644
1982-83	283,806	203,617	23,072
1983-84	310,585	223,131	24,889

Criminal Legal Aid Applications

Year	*Made*	*Granted*	*Refused*
1979	438,052	387,581	50,471
1980	489,663	430,320	59,343
1981	514,462	452,461	62,001
1982	541,215	479,950	61,265
1983	560,462	497,137	63,325

The number of refusals and grants of civil legal aid taken together do not match applications. The discrepancy is caused by applications being withdrawn before they have been considered and because some applications made in one year are not determined until the next. This difference does not arise with criminal legal aid, where statistics are recorded after the application is determined.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now intends to prepare and publish an updated review of projected housing need and demand in relation to effective supply from both public and private sectors as recommended by the Environment Committee in its first report of Session 1979-80.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend does not believe that global projections of housing need and demand, of the kind set out in the Green Paper on housing policy published by the previous Government in 1977, are of great help in decision taking. As far as the private sector is concerned, the housebuilding industry is in the best position to assess future market prospects. In the public sector, it is for local authorities to assess their local requirements; the Government take account of the views of local authorities, as reflected both in their individual housing investment programme returns, and through the local authority associations, when deciding on the total public expenditure provision for housing and on its allocation between authorities.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment upon what assumptions he determines current housing demand in relation to effective supply from both the public and private sectors; and to what extent future assumptions will take account of his Department's recent report, "Local Authority Empty Dwellings."

Sir George Young: My Department does not determine current housing demand in relation to effective supply. In the private sector, the housebuilding industry is in the best position to assess future market prospects. As regards the public sector, my Department takes account of many factors, including such facts as those reported in "Local Authority Empty Dwellings", in considering both the total public expenditure provision for housing and its allocation between local authorities.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider, in the light of his Department's recent report on "Local Authority Empty Dwellings", his response to the observations contained in the Environment Committee's third report of Session 1980-81 concerning the extent to which, in the Committee's opinion, housing expenditure was then being treated as a residual item in the public expenditure programme.

Sir George Young: At no time since 1979 has housing been treated as a residual item in the determination of the Government's public expenditure plans. In deciding what provision should be made for housing the Government have regard to a wide range of indicators of housing need, within an overall judgment of what the country can afford. The report on local authority empty dwellings recognises

that a large proportion of long-term empty dwellings is awaiting expenditure on rehabilitation, but concludes that improved local management, combined with effective sales policies, could substantially reduce their numbers.

Licensed Premises (Rating)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to carry out the rating revaluation of licensed premises under the Rates Act 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: The provision in schedule 1 of the Rates Act 1984 relating to the method of assessing licensed premises between revaluations will not take effect until the next revaluation of non-domestic properties. An announcement on the timing of a non-domestic revaluation will be made in due course.

Ravenglass (Sludge)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if samples of the sludge from Ravenglass deposited in a Westminster street on 26 February are to be assayed; how the mass of slurry will be handled while the assessment is under way; if a specific search will be made for alpha emission; and how, and where, the mass will be disposed of.

Mr. Waldegrave: An initial check by geiger counter did not detect significant levels of radioactivity in the mud. However samples are now being thoroughly analysed and assayed. All forms of radioactivity will be covered. Meanwhile the mud is being temporarily stored in an enclosed container. Once the results of the analysis are available, appropriate arrangements will be made for disposal. It is not expected that this will pose any technical problem.

Acid Rain

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now reply to the letter sent to him by the hon. Member for Gower on 14 January on the links between reintroducing a lime subsidy on upland soils and acid rain.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall reply shortly.

Audit Commission

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances he would propose to use his powers under section 22 of or schedule 3 to the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to give directions to the Audit Commission.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend has reserve and discretionary powers under section 22 and schedule 3 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982; any case would need to be considered individually on its merits.

Housing Stock

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answers to the hon. Member for Coventry South-East, on 26 February, he will give the total housing stock, and the percentages represented by the answers of 26 February, for Coventry, West Midlands and nationally.

Sir George Young: The percentages of the dwellin stock which were defective at 1 April 1984, are given the following table and are based on the total stoc estimate for Coventry provided in the authority's housin investment programme return and on the estimates mad by the Department for the region and for England.

	Coventry	*West Midlands Region*	*Englan*
Dwelling stock	119,874	1,975,000	*Numb* 18,420,0 *Percentag of sto*
Substandard dwellings: unfit	0·8	5·0	3·
fit but lacking one or more basic amenities	4·9	4·0	3·
Non-standard dwellings in need of renovations	11·8	14·0	12·

DEFENCE

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence i he will make a statement about the latest security positio at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Lee: The site has been cleared of trespassers, th temporary fencing and associated facilities are in place and the construction of a permanent fence is in hand. The site is guarded by the Ministry of Defence police. There have been a number of incidents of trespass and fence cutting but none has been of any significance and all i proceeding to schedule.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State fo Defence when he expects the new byelaw presently being drafted by lawyers employed by his Ministry to contro peace demonstrations at the proposed cruise missile base at Royal Air Force Molesworth to come into force.

Mr. Lee: Draft byelaws for the purpose of regulating the use of RAF Molesworth for defence purposes are currently being advertised for public comment. They will be made and come into force after any comments in response to the advertisement have been properly considered.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy not to make any change to their policy of non-production and non-storage of chemical and biological weapons in advance of the matter being debated in the House.

Mr. Stanley: The production and storage of biological weapons is not a policy issue as the United Kingdom is a party to, and co-depository of, the 1972 biological weapons convention which bans such action. On chemical weapons policy I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 10 January at column *901*. The question of a debate would be considered by the Leader of the House in the usual way.

Royal Navy

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many commissioned *(a)* captains, *(b)* commodores, *(c)* rear admirals and *(d)* admirals there are currently serving with the Royal Navy.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
Captains	296
Commodores	32
Rear Admirals	36
Admirals	4

In addition there are currently 10 vice admirals serving in the Royal Navy.

It should be noted that the rank of commodore is a temporary rank granted to captains holding certain appointments.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many ships are in service, in reserve or being refitted with the Royal Navy; what change in this figure will occur in the next five, 10 and 20 years, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The current strength of the fleet at frigate size and above is two ASW carriers, HMS Invincible and HMS Illustrious; HMS Hermes (on stand-by); two assault ships, HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid; 53 destroyers and frigates; four Polaris submarines and 28 nuclear powered fleet and conventionally-powered patrol submarines.

It is not the practice to give details of the forecast operational availability of warships for specific years. However, it remains the Government's policy that two carriers should be operational at any one time with a third in refit or stand-by, and to aim for a force level in the longer term of about 50 destroyers and frigates, all of which would be in the front line and none in the stand-by squadron. We are currently examining the provision of future amphibious capability once the existing assault ships, HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, come to the end of their planned lives in the mid-1990s. The Polaris fleet will be replaced in the 1990s with a force of four Trident D5 missile submarines; and overall numbers of nuclear-powered and conventional submarines are likely to remain generally constant, although the fleet will contain a higher proportion of nuclear-powered submarines.

Redundancies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has made any employee compulsorily redundant in 1985 or in the five preceding years.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Trident

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions will need to be made in his budget when the cost of Trident rises to a proportion of 6 per cent.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement told the hon. Member on 19 February at column *430* we expect Trident expenditure to reach 6 per cent. of the defence budget in its peak years, and this is already taken into account in our defence budget planning.

General Belgrano

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate total cost involved in answering parliamentary questions, preparing material for other Departments so to do and in preparing material for debates, surrounding all the allegations made about the sinking of the General Belgrano.

Mr. Heseltine: Parliamentary business concerning the sinking of the Belgrano and surrounding issues has, since the event, occupied a large amount of the time of Ministers and senior officials. No record has been kept of all of this effort and it is not therefore possible readily to provide an accurate estimate of the total cost. As an example of some of the work involved, Defence Ministers and the Prime Minister have answered more than 200 parliamentary questions on "Belgrano matters". The effect of all these inquiries has been to show that the Government took the appropriate measures to counter the threats to the task force, on the basis of military and other advice which no responsible Government could have ignored.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of *(a)* the minute dated 9 April 1984 to Mr. Ponting requesting a reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), *(b)* the minute dated 12 April 1984 from Mr. Ponting to the Secretary of State for Defence together with the proposed draft reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, *(c)* the minute dated 2 May 1984 to Mr. Ponting requesting a draft reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow's letter of 1 May 1984, *(d)* the minute dated 9 May from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Mr. Ponting, *(e)* the minute dated 9 May 1984 from Mr. Ponting to the Secretary of State for Defence, together with the draft reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow and Mr. Ponting's minute to the Prime Minister, *(f)* the minute dated 10 May 1984 from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the Secretary of State for Defence, *(g)* the minute dated 11 May 1984 from the Secretary of State for Defence to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, *(h)* the minute dated 3 July 1984 from DS11 to DS5 relating to Mr. Ponting, *(i)* the minute dated 4 July 1984 from DS5 to DS11 relating to Mr. Ponting, *(j)* the minute dated 6 July 1984 from the head of DS11 to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces relating to Mr. Ponting and *(k)* the minute from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the Secretary of State referred to on 18 February, *Official Report*, columns 745-46.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

I have already placed in the Library a copy of the request from my private secretary, dated 22 March 1984, to Mr. Ponting to provide a draft reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 19 March 1984. I have also provided a copy of the draft reply which Mr. Ponting recommended to me on 29 March 1984. These documents are relevant to the decision I took at the time on the handling of the hon. Member for Linlithgow's letter and, as I had to quote from them in the House in order to deal with assertions made by Mr. Ponting, I thought it right to make them available. As I made clear in the House, the essence of Mr. Ponting's subsequent minutes of 12 April 1984 and 9 May 1984 was that the information requested by the hon. Member for Linlithgow about the Belgrano's course and related matters was not

classified and that, if it were sought in parliamentary questions, in Mr. Ponting's view, there would be no reason to withhold it. I also explained that that was not his original advice. I explained in the debate in the House on 18 February why I, as the Minister accountable to Parliament in this matter, replied as I did to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 18 April 1984. In that reply, I did not follow Mr. Ponting's revised advice adopted in his second recommended draft on 12 April. The Government had already decided to proceed on lines consistent with his earlier advice.

I have already placed in the House of Commons Library a copy of head of DS11's minute of 6 July 1984 since it was necessary for me to quote from it during the debate in order to dispose of the unfounded allegation that it showed that Ministers had sought to mislead Parliament. The other documents requested concerning the Foreign Affairs Committee memorandum were internal Ministry of Defence correspondence between officials.

Equipment Programmes (Cost)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total capital cost in 1984-85 prices of the following equipment programmes, including aircraft, initial spares and weapons and equipment fitted on the ships *(a)* anti-submarine warfare carrier programme, and *(b)* type 42 programme.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total capital cost in 1984-85 prices of the following equipment programme *(a)* original Polaris programmes, *(b)* the Chevaline programme and *(c)* the re-motoring programme for the Polaris missiles.

Mr. Lee: The capital acquisition cost of the original Polaris programme was some £330 million over the years 1963 to 1972. The information which would enable a detailed up-pricing of this figure is not available, but it is roughly estimated that exchange rate and price variations to bring it to 1984-85 prices would have increased by about tenfold. The capital cost of the Chevaline and Polaris remotoring programmes up-priced to 1984-85 prices would be some £2,000 million and £400 million respectively. All the figures use the exchange rate of £1=$1·38 used for this year's recosting of the defence programme.

Tornado

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total capital cost of the Tornado programme at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Lee: The total estimated production cost to the United Kingdom of the Tornado aircraft programme is £6,554 million at forecast average 1984-85 prices. Development cost estimates for the project are still classified. Other related infrastructure costs are also excluded.

ROF Euxton

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State Defence what was the value of surplus Army equipm destroyed at the royal ordnance factory at Euxton sinc January.

Mr. Lee: I am not aware that any surplus equipm of recent Army origin has been destroyed at the ro ordnance factory at Chorley (Euxton) since 2 Janu 1985, although I understand that some items of world two vintage may have been destroyed during site cleara in preparation for rebuilding work. I suggest the h Member writes to the chairman if he wishes to ob further details.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State Defence why surplus Army uniforms, boots, overco and blankets have been destroyed at the royal ordna factory at Euxton since 1 January; and if he will mak statement.

Mr. Lee: The reason for the destruction of any ite of Army clothing or bedding at the royal ordnance fact at Euxton is, since 2 January 1985, the concern of Ro Ordnance plc and not the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State Defence how many blankets, sheets, boots and overcoa respectively, have been destroyed at the royal ordna factory at Euxton since 1 January.

Mr. Lee: The quantities of any blankets, sheets, bo and overcoats destroyed at the royal ordnance factory Euxton since 2 January 1985 are the concern of Ro Ordnance plc and not the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State Defence whether it is normal practice to dispose of surp military clothing by destroying it at royal ordna factory, Euxton.

Mr. Lee: No.

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State Defence what arrangements exist for informing loc authorities in Scotland when military low flying below t normal minimum of 250 ft is due to take place.

Mr. Lee: Military flying at heights below 250 ft normally authorised only in special training areas whi have been established over some of the most sparse populated areas of the United Kingdom. Local authoriti were informed about these areas when they were fi established.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State f Defence what percentage of low flying exercises in t Highlands restricted area is conducted below the norm minimum of 250 ft.

Mr. Lee: Less than 5 per cent.

Sea-skimming Missiles

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State f Defence what is the principal means of defence again sea-skimming missiles which it is intended to fit to typ 22 Batch III frigates and early vessels in the type 23 clas

Mr. Heseltine: It is intended to fit the Seawolf poi defence missile system both to the type 22 Batch I

frigates and the early type 23s, but the type 22 batch III will receive Seawolf in its latest conventionally launched version, rather than the vertically launched version, as I said in reply to my hon. Friend on 28 January at column 25. The intention is to fit the vertically launched version, which is currently under development, to the early type 23 frigates. In addition, the type 22 batch III ships will be fitted with the Goalkeeper close-in weapon system to provide a last ditch defence against sea-skimming missiles.

US Mutual Defence Assistance pogramme

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the latest United States mutual defence assistance programme equipment disposal deposit account will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The account for the year ended 31 March 1984 has been published today as Cmnd. 9448.

This account receives the proceeds, less allowable expenses, of sales of equipment and material originally supplied by the United States during the 1950s under the mutual defence assistance programme. The funds are used, following consultation and agreement with the United States authorities, for United Kingdom projects for the defence of the NATO area additional to the defence effort of the United Kingdom, or for such other projects as may be mutually agreed. Receipts into the account have diminished in recent years and in 1983-84 totalled £5,308, though they will be greater in 1984-85. After consultation with the United States authorities the Government have decided as a measure of administrative economy to discontinue publication of the annual account as a Command paper. The Government will however arrange for any future account to be placed in the Library of the House should an hon. Member so request. The Comptroller and Auditor General will continue to audit and certify the account.

West Germany (Border Security)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what artificial barriers exist on the West German border with Eastern Europe to deter incursions by hostile tanks.

Mr. Stanley: There are no such barriers in place in peacetime. It is not the practice to comment on wartime plans.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what specific actions have been taken by the United Kingdom in pursuit of its obligations under article VI of the non-proliferation treaty.

(2) what action Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1980 to reduce their stocks of nuclear weapons in accordance with the provisions of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Stanley: There is no obligation placed on nuclear weapon states in the non-proliferation treaty to reduce their stocks of nuclear weapons unilaterally. Article VI of the treaty commits all parties to negotiations in good faith on measures to halt the nuclear arms race and relating to nuclear disarmament. The first priority must be for reductions in the arsenals of the US and USSR, which hold the vast majority of such weapons. The UK has strongly supported US efforts to achieve agreements aimed at doing this and fully shares the objectives of working out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth, at limiting and reducing nuclear arms and at strengthening strategic stability.

SCOTLAND

Aerial Spraying (Speyside)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotand when he will publish the findings of the Forestry Commission control experiment involving the aerial spraying of 142 hectares of land in Speyside in 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: The findings will be published by the Forestry Commission in a research and development volume later this year.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what effects were expected following the aerial spraying of 142 hectares of land in Speyside as part of a control experiment by the Forestry Commission in 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: There was no evidence that aerial spraying of forests with fenitrothion had any adverse effect on bird populations, but this was a control experiment and it would have been wrong to anticipate the results.

Shellfish

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the value of commercial landings of oysters and of all other shellfish for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his answer*, 28 February 1985]: The information is as follows:

Value of shellfish landings in Scotland by United Kingdom vessels:

	Oysters	*Other shellfish*	*Total shellfish*
1980	—	19,368,066	19,368,066
1981	—	21,084,289	21,084,289
1982	420	23,753,808	23,754,228
1983	125	29,174,081	29,174,206
1984	—	33,376,181	33,376,181

PRIME MINISTER

Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing output per head for the whole working population for the latest 12 months for which figures are available as a percentage of 1973 and 1979; and if she will provide similar figures excluding the production of oil and gas.

The Prime Minister: Figures of output per head in the United Kingdom are usually published on the basis of numbers employed, that is, employees in employment plus self-employed persons. The working population includes the claimant unemployed. An output per head series compiled on the definition requested for the whole economy is shown below. As there is no way of allocating

all the unemployed to individual industries, it is not possible to compile figures on this definition below whole economy level.

The comparison requested is shown on published basis as follows:

Output per head (1980 = 100)

	Of the working population—whole economy	*Of numbers employed Whole economy*	*Wh excludi of mi*
1973	99·6	95·7	
1979	103·7	102·3	
Latest 12 months (1983 Q4 to 1984 Q3)	104·6	111·0	
	per cent.	*per cent.*	
Latest 12 months as percentage of 1973	105·0	116·0	
Latest 12 months as percentage of 1979	100·9	108·5	

* Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

Agricultural Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the Government have carried out a review of the direct and indirect costs of the common agricultural policy to the United Kingdom and of the likely increase in costs in the future in the absence of measures to put a stop to the growth in agricultural output.

The Prime Minister: I agree that it is essential that the cost of the CAP must be contained. That is why at our instigation the Council of Ministers has adopted conclusions of budgetary discipline, including a financial guideline for agriculture which provides, broadly, that CAP expenditure can only increase at a rate less than the rate of growth of the Community's own resources base. The costs of the CAP to the United Kingdom will be further mitigated by the agreement reached at Fontainebleau on budgetary imbalances.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the annual average increase in gross domestic product in real terms, excluding the production of oil and gas, for the decades ended in 1984, 1974 and 1964, respectively; and if she will include similar figures for manufacturing output.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

Average percentage growth rate per year over period

	1954-64	*1964-74*	*1974-84*
*Gross domestic product †excluding extraction of mineral oil and natural gas	+2·8	+2·3	+0·7
Manufacturing output	+3·4	+2·5	−1·2

* Based on the output measure of constant price GDP, which is the appropriate measure for comparison by industry.
† Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.
Source: Central Statistical Office

EC (Agriculture Support)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minist she will publish in the *Official Report* a table sh 1983 and 1984 what each member state receive EEC by way of support from agriculture, the p of the total, and the amount paid into the EEC as a percentage of own-resources payments.

The Prime Minister: The following table se information requested for 1983. Equivalent fi 1984 are not yet available.

	Receipts from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)	*per cent. share of total EAGGF receipts*	*s rec*
	Mecu		
Belgium	635·4	3·8	
Denmark	702·7	4·2	
Germany	3184·7	19·1	
Greece	1029·4	6·2	
France	3818·6	22·9	
Ireland	700·4	4·2	
Italy	2976·3	17·9	
Luxembourg	5·1	—	
Netherlands	1749·5	10·5	
United Kingdom	1845·1	11·1	

(Sources: Commission EAGGF Financial Report; Court Report)

USA (Imports)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minis assurances she sought from President Reagan on h visit to the United States of America that no pro measures will be imposed on imports to the Unit of America from the United Kingdom following t appreciation of the United States dollar against t sterling.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lad Statement I made to the House on 26 February a 173-186.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Prime Minister what criteria were taken into account when deciding on the relative cut in expenditure on the Agricultural Development Advisory Service in England, Wales and Scotland, respectively; and why the percentage cut in Scotland is greater than in England and Wales.

The Prime Minister: The Government's expenditure plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 published in January 1985 provide for a reduction in expenditure by the agricultural Departments on advisory services to farmers by £20 million in 1987-88. This reduction reflects the Government's aim that industry should make a greater financial contribution towards the cost of services from which it benefits and is provisional and depends on progress towards achievement of this aim. My right hon. Friends, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland agreed that the proposed reduction would be shared pro rata to the planned expenditure by their Departments on Advisory Services in 1987-88. On that basis it is proposed that the planned expenditure of £40 million by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on advisory services in 1987-88 will be reduced by £16·6 million and the planned expenditure of £8·2 million by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland will be reduced by £3·4 million. Thus the percentage cut in Scotland is no greater than that in England and Wales.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bophuthatswana

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what respect Bophuthatswana fails to satisfy the accepted Foreign and Commonwealth Office criteria for the recognition of a sovereign state.

Mr. Rifkind: We do not recognise Boputhatswana as an independent State on the grounds that it does not enjoy genuine independence.

European Council

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the European Council; and what is its relationship with other European Economic Community institutions.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Council was set up by Heads of Government at the Paris summit in December 1974

"to ensure progress and overall consistency in the activities of the Communities and in the work on political co-operation".

The relationship of the European Council with other community institutions is set out in the solemn declaration of 19 June 1983, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Heads of Government Meetings

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis the United Kingdom participates in decisions by European Economic Community Heads of Government meetings which do not stem from obligations under the basic European Economic Community treaties.

Mr. Rifkind: The basis on which the European Council meets is set out in the solemn declaration of June 1983, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Decisions in the field of political co-operation are implemented as part of the foreign policy of each member state. Decisions which fail to be implemented by means of Community instruments become the subject of normal Council procedures and parliamentary scrutiny procedures in this country.

Torture (UN Convention)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government intend to sign and ratify the United Nations convention against torture; whether Her Majesty's Government support the principle of an optional protocol to the convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We hope to sign the United Nations convention against torture shortly. We shall have to consider what reservations, interpretative declarations or domestic legislation may be required before we can ratify. We shall also need to consult the dependent territories, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

We are still considering the optional protocol, which has not yet been the subject of detailed discussion at the United Nations.

Falklands Conflict

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what time and on what date the Foreign and Commonwealth Office first learnt of the press conference held in Lima by President Belaunde Terry on 2 May 1982 at which he announced that Britain and the Argentine had agreed to cease hostilities and were studying proposals formulated by the United States Secretary of State.

Mr. Renton: The Peruvian President's press conference started at 1800 peruvian time (2300 GMT) on 2 May 1982. Her Majesty's ambassador in Lima's telegram reporting it was sent at 0144 GMT on 3 May 1982. The Peruvian President announced proposals, but no agreement.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Training)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much of the course work and the practical work, respectively, of teacher training colleges is devoted to acquainting students with the special factors relevant to the teaching of pupils from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Dunn: The criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training require that students should be prepared to teach the full range of pupils, to respond flexibly to their particular needs, and to guard against preconceptions based on race or sex. Teacher training institutions adopt various approaches to the promotion of an awareness of the needs of ethnic minority pupils: a number seek to ensure that it permeates all aspects of the curriculum, while others devote a special course unit to this aspect of training. Through practical work institutions are expected to seek to offer their students a broad range

of experience in schools, though their scope for ensuring that students gain experience of teaching children from ethnic minority groups will vary according to their location. My right hon. Friend will give careful consideration to any recommendations on teacher training made by the committee of inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups chaired by Lord Swann.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there is any racism awareness training available for teachers in maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that a small number of in-service training courses concerned with "racism awareness" are currently available and that there are differing views about the value of such courses. My right hon. Friend expects to consider questions of teaching approaches and training needs in the light of the report of the committee of inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups chaired by Lord Swann.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional amount would be paid to a qualified teacher at the starting point of grade 1 and to a qualified headteacher at the highest point of school group 14, respectively, if the current pay claim by teachers were accepted.

Sir Keith Joseph: The teachers' current claim is that all teachers should receive the same increase of £1,200 pa from 1 April 1985.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average salary of full-time primary and secondary school teachers, excluding heads and deputy heads, in maintained schools in England and Wales for each year since 1973, in current prices and constant 1983-84 prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

A1 (Anglo-Scottish Border)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects the Anglo-Scottish border on the A1 to be clearly indicated.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department is arranging to have a stone carved, vandal proof sign erected at the Anglo-Scottish border on the A1. We shall endeavour to have the sign in place within the next four months. I am writing to the hon. Member.

Bitumen

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the rise in the schedule price of bitumen since the start of 1984; and what impact this will have on the volume of road maintenance and road construction in 1985-86.

Mrs. Chalker: Based on schedules of prices issued by some major producers, bitumen prices have risen in the range of 30 to 38 per cent. since the beginni The price of bitumen is only one among m which influence the overall costs of road cons maintenance. The net effect on the trunk road is expected to be less than 1 per cent. which be offset by the continuing trend of keen ten

DVLC (Costs)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary o Transport what was the annual operating cost and vehicle licensing centre in 1982, 1983 respectively.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The approximate t operating the driver and vehicle licensing including its local office network, was £91·3 1982-83 and £102·3 million in 1983-84. Th cost for 1984-85 is £108·8 million.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Tamper-proof Me

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary Transport if any progress has been made in d tamper-proof mechanism on fuel-injection equ heavy goods vehicles.

Mrs. Chalker: No. At present it does possible to overcome the practical problems for tampering whilst at the same time permitting adjustments to be made.

Pilotage

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary Transport what representations the General British Shipping has made to Her Majesty's G about the reorganisation of pilotage since 1983 will place copies of such representations in th

Mr. David Mitchell: Since 1983 we hav four representations from the GCBS wholly concerning the reorganisation of pilotage. In a GCBS has made representations on a numb pilotage orders and byelaws providing for reo in particular pilotage districts; and I and my off met the GCBS from time to time to discuss mutual concern, including pilotage. The m representation contains the GCBS's commen "Consultative Document on Marine Pilotage" December, and with its agreement I am placing these comments in the Library.

Gatwick (Signposting)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for if he will take steps to secure the signposting o airport on main roads leading to it from Ke central London area.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall answer this question

HOME DEPARTMENT

Correspondence

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Department if he will arrange for his Departme sending acknowledgement postcards, other

sealed envelope, when those cards refer to the name and addresses of constituents concerning whom hon. Members have been in correspondence.

Mr. Leon Brittan: I am not persuaded that the additional expenditure involved in placing all acknowledgement cards in sealed envelopes would be justified. I have, however, made special arrangements for the hon. Member's post to be dealt with in that way.

Immigration (Entry Clearance)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the certified copies of the sponsored passports relating to the entry clearance required by the fiancé of Miss Mossarat Zahra Abbas of 21 Longton road, Stone, have now been received by the authorities in Islamabad.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that the entry clearance officer in Islamabad received a certified copy of Miss Abbas's current passport but that she has not provided copies of previous passports on which she had travelled. As further information is required before a decision can be taken on the application of her fiancé, Mr. Sadat Ali Shah, arrangements are now being made for Miss Abbas to be interviewed here.

Telephone Tapping

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the years 1979 to 1984 the number of telephones which were tapped on grounds other than *(a)* terrorism directed from Ireland and the middle east and *(b)* murder, theft and similar criminal activities without any evidence of political motive.

Mr. Brittan: No. Successive Governments have accepted the conclusion of the 1957 Committee of Privy Councillors under the chairmanship of Lord Birkett that there are powerful arguments against disclosing statistics of authorised interception. Exceptions to this policy have been made only in the Birkett report itself (Cmnd. 283) and in the 1980 and 1985 White Papers on the "Interception of Communications" (Cmnd. 7873 of April 1980 and Cmnd. 9438 of February 1985). To give statistics which distinguished certain authorisations on national security grounds from other authorised interception would be particularly harmful since (in the words of paragraph 121 of the Birkett report):

"it would greatly aid the operation of agencies hostile to the state if they were able to estimate even approximately the extent of the interceptions of communications for security purposes."

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Mark Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy of referring to the Parole Board the cases of life sentence prisoners who have already spent long periods in custody.

Mr. Brittan: On 30 November 1983 I informed the House of my policy on life sentence prisoners. The first stage in the formal review by the Parole Board machinery is the reference of the case to the local review committee at the prison at which the life sentence prisoner is held. The date of this first formal review is normally set for three years before the expiry of the period thought necessary to meet the requirements of retribution and deterrence which I decide after consultation with the judiciary. When this period is longer than 20 years, however, I have decided that the date of the first formal review should nonetheless still be set after 17 years in custody or at, or close to, the date when the case would again have been considered by the now disbanded joint parole board-Home Office committee. Both the prison staff and the prisoner are, however, informed that reviews set in these special circumstances do not in any way imply that 20 years has been set as the period necessary to meet the requirements of retribution and deterrence.

In accordance with this policy, I am asking the LRCs at the prisons in which Ian Brady and Myra Hindley are detained to consider their cases as soon as possible and for the Parole Board subsequently to make its recommendations to me. The review of these cases does not mean either that the periods of detention necessary to meet the requirements of retribution and deterrence have been completed or are near completion; or that the Parole Board will recommend the release of either prisoner; or that I would necessarily accept such a recommendation if it were made.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each of the past five years, the total income that the British Broadcasting Corporation received from television licences and the amount of licence revenue paid into Government funds from gross licence revenue.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The BBC's licence fee income and the gross television licence fee revenue were as follows:

	BBC Income £ *Million*	*Gross Revenue* £ *Million*
1979-80	398·8	428·9
1980-81	503·3	532·1
1981-82	557·4	602·4
1982-83	696·8	740·0
1983-84	697·9	762·8

The difference between the two figures takes account of a complex series of adjustments in respect of over or under payments in individual years.

Civil Defence Adviser (Letter)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the letter set out by Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to the Home Office, on 9 November 1984 was sent with his authorisation; and if he will publish the text of the letter and the enclosures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The adviser's letter, which did not require authorisation and did not state Government policy, has my full support. It was intended to make available a contribution to the debate on the nuclear winter hypothesis in response to requests for information from county emergency planning officers. Whilst it would not be appropriate to reproduce the letter in the *Official Report* I have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

Cash Limit

Mr. Ryder asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has plans to alter the cash limit relating to Class IX, Vote 7.

Mr. Brittan: Reduced requirements this financial year, mainly on capital expenditure on police technical services and training and on accommodation, enable me to announce a reduction in the cash limit for this Vote from £304,452,000 to £294,452,000.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Soil Survey

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he took before announcing his decision on 18 January to reduce his Department's funding of the Soil Survey of England and Wales to satisfy himself that the survey would have access to adequate funds from other sources to enable it to continue.

Mr. Jopling: Our consideration of the work of the Soil Survey indicated that a wide range of organisations in both the public and private sectors make use of the information and expertise which it provides. We believe this offers scope for the survey to develop these links and to operate more commercially in the future.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the main achievements so far of the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: The work of the survey has provided a scientific basis for the classification of soils and an inventory of information which provides a valuable database. It has recently completed soil maps at a scale of 1 : 250,000 covering England and Wales. It has also undertaken a range of other mapping work and integrated soil, crop and climate studies.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he undertook before his announcement to the House on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *248*, concerning the proposed reduction in funding for the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: In considering the future funding of the Soil Survey there were consultations with the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food. My right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister of State, also met members of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants representing the staff of the Soil Survey.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to other EEC countries which have national soil surveys in progress or completed.

Mr. Jopling: I understand that a soil survey map is now in preparation for the whole of the European Community at a scale of 1 : 1 million and that this is likely to be published shortly. In addition individual member states prepare national maps at varying scales.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he made any assessment of the possible implications for redundancies before he took his decision to reduce the level of his Department's funding of the Soil Survey of England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The decision to maintain funding at the planned level in 1985-86 and to give notice of the level of commissioned work in 1986-87 was intended to give the Soil Survey and the Agricultural and Food Research Council an opportunity to develop alternative sources of funding and to minimise the implications of the change for the staff involved.

WALES

Assisted Areas

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the counties of South Glamorgan, Gwent, Powys, Gwynedd and Clwyd the percentage of the working population that resided in assisted areas eligible for regional development grant previous to the changes that took effect in the assisted area map on 29 November 1984; and what is the equivalent percentage figures after those changes have been introduced.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The relevant percentage coverage for the counties of South Glamorgan, Gwent, Powys, Gwynedd and Clwyd is as follows:

	Before 29 November 1984	*From 29 November 1984*
South Glamorgan	100	0
Gwent	97	31
Powys	15	5
Gwynedd	68	23
Clwyd	80	84

The information relates to the economically active population.

Hill and Marginal Land

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many acres of hill and marginal land were reclaimed in Wales in the last 12 months; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Separate records are not kept of the acreage of hill and marginal land that is reclaimed in Wales. The following figures show the amount of grant that has been paid on reclamation work under the farm capital grant schemes during the last seven years in the less favoured area of Wales. Statistics for earlier years are not available.

Year (January to December)	*Amount paid £*
1978	47,038
1979	50,693
1980	78,822
1981	62,187
1982	95,038
1983	147,621
*1984	135,692

* To end September only.

Lime Subsidy

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce a lime subsidy scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to introduce a lime subsidy scheme, but support for liming as a capital improvement in the less favoured area continues to be available under the capital grant schemes.

Natural Woodland

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to safeguard natural woodland in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Forestry Commission is developing policy proposals for broadleaved woodland in the light of responses to its consultative paper "Broadleaves in Britain". The best and most practical means of safeguarding ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland is one of the important questions being covered. My right hon. Friends and I expect to be in a position to make a statement by the summer recess.

Unemployment

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet representatives of Preseli district council to discuss the unemployment situation in North Pembrokeshire; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans at present for such a meeting. Development prospects in the area benefit from the continuing work of the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board as well as receiving assistance as an intermediate area and from European sources.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet representatives of Ceredigion district council to discuss the unemployment situation in the Teify valley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans at present for such a meeting. The various initiatives set in hand in June last year with the aim of creating employment opportunities in the Teifi valley are progressing satisfactorily. The Dyfed county council, Welsh Development Agency, Wales tourist board, Mid-Wales Development and others are participating fully. These initiatives are in addition to programmes of aid from Government, statutory agencies and European sources.

Drainage Grants

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been paid in drainage grants to farmers in Wales during the last year; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The amount paid in drainage grants under the farm capital grant schemes to farmers in Wales during the past nine years is as follows:

Year (January-December)	*Amount paid £*
1976	1,144,041
1977	1,400,585
1978	1,669,755
1979	1,805,068
1980	2,565,198
1981	2,496,439
1982	4,206,184
1983	4,762,150
1984 (to end September)	5,060,190

The information for 1975 is not available.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to help pig producers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no specific plans to help pig producers. Returns to producers have been higher in recent months than during the corresponding period a year earlier.

Land Bank

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to take steps to introduce a land bank in the current year to help new entrants to farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to do so.

Secretary of State (Official Visits)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each county in Wales the number of official visits that he has made for each year since his appointment.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have made numerous official and private visits to each county in the Principality.

Health Service Commissioner (Investigations)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases were investigated by the Health Service Commissioner in each of the area health authorities in Wales in the year ended 31 March 1983; what were the results of those investigations; and what actions were subsequently taken.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of households and the rate per 1,000 population in each local authority who received assistance with the provision of disabled persons (household aids) in *(a)* 1982-83 and *(b)* 1983-84.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Provision of Aids

Local authority	*Number of cases of assistance during 1982-83*	*Rate per 1,000 population*	*Number of cases of assistance during 1983-84*	*Rate per 1,000 population*
Clwyd	4,423	11·2	7,812	19·7
Dyfed	3,411	10·2	4,358	13·0
Gwent	5,654	12·8	5,624	12·8
Gwynedd	2,109	9·1	2,188	9·4
Mid Glamorgan	5,220	9·7	9,233	17·2
Powys	751	6·8	1,011	9·1
South Glamorgan	1,879	4·8	2,383	6·1
West Glamorgan	1,821	4·9	2,038	5·6

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of households containing disabled children and the rate per 1,000 child population in each local authority who received assistance with the payment of telephone rentals in *(a)* 1982-83 and *(b)* 1983-84.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is collected in terms of the numbers of children assisted and the figures are given in the following table:

Assistance with telephone rentals

Local Authority	*Number of cases of assistance during 1982-83*	*Rate per 1,000 children aged under 16*	*Number of cases of assistance during 1983-84*	*Rate per 1,000 children aged under 16*
Clwyd	10	0·11	9	0·10
Dyfed	2	0·03	5	0·07
Gwent	14	0·14	13	0·14
Gwynedd	14	0·28	13	0·27
Mid Glamorgan	18	0·14	34	0·28
Powys	1	0·04	1	0·04
South Glamorgan	3	0·04	12	0·14
West Glamorgan	—	—	13	0·17

Public Bodies (Remuneration)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each public body to which he makes appointments, the financial remuneration paid to each member for each year since 1979, separately distinguishing between expenses and income.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Particulars of financial remuneration paid to each member of each of the public bodies appointed solely by me are included where appropriate in the publication Public Bodies which has been updated annually since 1982 and copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. The remuneration paid at 1 July 1984 is included in "Public Bodies 1984" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on 18 December 1984. Details of remuneration paid prior to 1982 are not available in readily accessible form and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Information on expenses paid to individual appointees is not held centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* for each county the number of children taken into care in the years 1982, 1983, and 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information available is given in the following table and refers to the most recent care episode of each child who came into care during the 12 months ended 31 March.

Children taken into care

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Clwyd	243	198	146
Dyfed	140	125	110
Gwent	377	379	315
Gwynedd	145	147	99
Mid Glamorgan	436	404	328
Powys	39	62	55
South Glamorgan	360	342	320
West Glamorgan	221	188	189

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information known to him regarding visits to Wales by overseas visitors for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information on the numbers of overseas visitors and their spending is obtained through the international passenger survey—a survey carried out for the Department of Trade and Industry by the Office of Population Censuses. The estimates are based on interviews with a random sample of passengers entering and leaving the United Kingdom.

The details relating to visitors to Wales have to be treated with caution because of the small sample size. Figures for the period 1974-1983 (the latest date for which the information is available) are as follows:

Overseas visitors to Wales	Number (000s)	Revenue (£ million)
1974	260	20
1975	280	30
1976	320	50
1977	390	100
1978	660	100
1979	530	100
1980	400	100
*1981	400	50
1982	440	50
1983	510	75

* Direct comparisons of estimated overseas revenue are not possible for the years prior to 1981 owing to changes in the method of collection. Estimates for 1980 and before are nominal and should be regarded as broad approximations only.

The survey collects information about the countries of origin of visitors. Figures for 1982 showed the proportions of visitors to Wales as:

North America 24 per cent., European Community 44 per cent., other Western Europe 7 per cent., other areas 25 per cent. A similar analysis has not been made for other years and could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Entertainment Allowance

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total entertainment allowance of his Department for the years 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 19 June 1984 at column *87*.

Patient Committees

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has regarding the development of patient committees in Wales, whose establishment was outlined in paragraph 11.34 of the Royal Commission on the National Health Service, Cmnd. 7615; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There is no centrally held data about patient committees in Wales, but I am aware that seven such committees are affiliated to the National Association of Patient Participation whose administration costs are supported by a central government grant.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Research Projects

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of resources he proposes to devote to research projects undertaken by the National Physical Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory, the Warren Spring Laboratory and the Laboratory of the Government Chemist in the next three years.

Mr. Butcher: This financial year the total cost of the four laboratories will be about £61 million. However, they expect to earn around £17 million for repayment work from both the public and private sectors. Their net cost will therefore be in the region of £44 million. There are currently no plans to change this level of support.

Information Technology

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he will seek with the information technology skills shortage committee about the effects of the shortage of manpower on the future of information technology in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: As chairman of the committee, I keep my colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Education and Science, and the Department of Employment fully informed of its views on the question of information technology manpower shortages.

Science and Technology

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the resources devoted to science and technology research as a percentage of his Department's total budget in each year since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: Most of the Department of Trade and Industry's scientific and technological assistance is provided for development work as well as research and it is not possible to disaggregate the research element. This assistance accounted for 6·3 per cent. of the Department's expenditure in 1979-80, 6·2 per cent. in 1980-81, 6·2 per cent. in 1981-82, 12·0 per cent. in 1982-83, 21·3 per cent. in 1983-84 and 24·8 per cent. (estimated) in 1984-85.

BSC (Refractory Division)

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will refer any proposed sale of the British Steel Corporation's refractory division to Hepworth's to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, with particular regard to future patterns of capacity, sales, market trends and imports.

Mr. Fletcher: The proposed merger is currently being considered by the Office of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend will announce his decision as soon as practicable.

BT (System Purchase)

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will ask the Director General of Telecommunications to investigate the implications of British Telecom's decision to buy an alternative to system X.

Mr. Pattie: No.

Cotton Velvet

Mr. Fox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department is continuing the special monitoring of imports of cotton velvet from Turkey which was in force during 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Yes, the special monitoring of imports of cotton velvet from Turkey is continuing.

Mr. Fox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing United Kingdom imports of cotton velvet under heading 58.04 6900, and the average import price per square metre in each month of 1984 for which figures are so far available.

Mr. Channon: The information relating to Tariff heading 58.04 6900 (within which cotton velvet cannot be separately distinguished) is as follows:

1984	*Value £ million (cif)*	*Quantity square metre (thous)*	*£ per square metre*
January	1·5	704	2·19
February	1·7	829	2·00
March	1·7	657	2·53
April	1·4	560	2·45
May	1·9	810	2·29
June	1·7	688	2·41
July	1·0	435	2·36
August	1·2	471	2·52
September	1·5	666	2·29
October	2·0	872	2·26
November	1·6	761	2·15
December	1·2	457	2·57

Source:
Data corresponding to Tariff heading 5804-6900 (ex SITC/R2 Item 652.23) in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: £ per sq m is calculated as value (cif) over Qty (sq m)

Trade Statistics

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries with which the United Kingdom had a trade imbalance in visible trade in 1984 but had a positive trade balance in 1979 or 1974, giving the relevant amounts, respectively.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

British Overseas Trade Board

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will revise the projected net cash budgets of the British Overseas Trade Board for the next four years to take account of the fall in the value of the pound sterling.

Mr. Channon: No. The Government place great importance on the restraint of public expenditure through cash limits and the BOTB budget cannot be exempt from the economies necessary to bring this about.

Knickers, Pants and Briefs

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) by how much imports of Portuguese knickers, pants and briefs, MFA category 13, exceeded the permitted quota in the period 1 October to 31 December 1984; and what action he proposes to take as a result;

(2) if the voluntary restraint arrangement to curtail the importation of Portuguese knickers, pants and briefs, MFA category 13, to 1·6 million pairs in the period from 1 October to 31 December 1984 was observed.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

International Commercial Arbitration

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what attitude Her Majesty's Government are taking towards the draft model law on international commercial arbitration which is to be considered in June by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

Mr. Channon: The Government have given cl attention to the deliberations of the working group UNCITRAL which has drawn up the draft model law. T text has been given a wide circulation in the Uni Kingdom and my Department has received comme from a number of individuals and organisations. Followi consulation with the Lord Chancellor, I have n established a Committee to consider these comments a to recommend what approach the United Kingdom sho adopt at the meeting in June and thereafter. The memb of the Committee will be:

Mr. Justice Mustill (Chairman), Mr L W M Alexander, R J Ayling, Mr W C Beckett CB, Mr S C Boyd QC, Mr Carpenter, Mr Clifford Clark MC, Mr J H Farr, Professor R Goode, Mr J M H Hunter, Mr R A MacCrindle QC, Mr J McCartney, Mr J Murray QC, Mr K S Rokison QC, Mr P Withers CBE and Mr S A Parker (Secretary).

Its principal terms of reference will be:

"1. To consider the draft model law on internatio commercial arbitration adopted by a working group of the Uni Nations Commission on International Trade Law in Febru 1984 and, in the light of any representations made by Brit interests, to advise the Secretary of State for Trade a Industry:—

(a) upon any modifications which the Commit considers should be proposed by HMG to the text the draft model law prior to its adoption by Commission;

(b) upon whether, and if so to what extent, the provisi of the model law should be implemented in Engla and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and up what measures should be taken for that purpose; what arrangements should be made to examine a aspects of this question, notably those which may ha different implications for the system of arbitration the three law districts.

2. To examine the operation of the Arbtration Acts 1950-19 in the light of the model law and to recommend to the Secreta of State any legislative or other steps which the Committ considers should be taken to improve the system of arbitrati in England and Wales.".

It is possible that these terms of reference may need be adjusted to respond to developments in UNCITRA My decision to appoint this Committee reflects the ve considerable impact which I believe the model law cou have on international commercial arbitration, both in th country and abroad. The text which the working group h produced is an impressive document, but it is too early say whether, with or without any improvements the Unit Kingdom may propose, it will find favour here or in oth countries.

EMPLOYMENT

Apprenticeships

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State f Employment (1) how many formal apprenticeships we available in the field of *(a)* telecommunications a *(b)* information technology, respectively in 1984; and ho many it is estimated that there will be available in 198

(2) how many formal apprenticeships are expected be available in 1985 in technical subjects;

(3) how many formal apprenticeships there we available in 1984 in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* oth sectors; and how many of these were in technic occupations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not availabl

With regard to the area of information technolog traditional apprenticeship is not the most common meth

of skills training, although such skills are being incorporated into apprenticeship training programmes. Similarly, technical skills are more usually gained through full and part-time technical college courses leading, for example, to qualifications from the Business and Technical Education Council.

The number entering traditional apprenticeships will become increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken by industry because of both the reform of existing training arrangements and the substantial provision of initial skills training now taking place under the youth training scheme.

Young Persons

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has conducted into the reasons why many employers in both public and private sectors have failed, despite advertising and the offer of pay and conditions agreed with the trade unions, to find young applicants for training and work.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Such research and surveys as are available show that the main reason why some vacancies are hard to fill is a shortage of suitably-qualified applicants. The Government's training policies are designed to help overcome that problem. However, if my hon. Friend will let me have details of specific cases I will gladly look into them.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of employees in employment in March 1974, in March 1979, and at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the estimated numbers of employees in employment in Great Britain for the dates specified. The figures are seasonally adjusted.

	Number
March 1974	22,214,000
March 1979	22,531,000
September 1984	20,701,000

Accidents (Reporting)

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements exist for reports of accidents to be made by employers to the Health and Safety Executive other than fatal accidents, serious injuries and dangerous occurences, as defined by the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no formal arrangements for the reporting of accidents by employers direct to the Health and Safety Executive other than those made by the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions are given to Manpower Services Commission staff as to the information on the health and safety record of individual schemes and projects on the youth training scheme that may be given to the Commission's area manpower boards when they are considering those schemes and projects for renewal; whether details of particular accidents may be disclosed to area manpower boards in such circumstances; and whether he is satisfied that area manpower boards can adequately fulfil their supervisory function on the basis of the information supplied.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *18-19*]: Officials of the Manpower Services Commission are instructed to inform area manpower boards of any health and safety problems which may have occurred on a scheme that is being considered for renewal. Commission officials can give statistical information as well as general information on specific incidents involving health and safety. Information which might prejudice subsequent legal proceedings is not normally disclosed. I am satisfied that area manpower boards are supplied with appropriate information to enable them to carry out their job effectively.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment what details of severe and fatal accidents on the youth training scheme it is the practice of the Manpower Services Commission *(a)* to disclose and *(b)* not to disclose to (i) outside individuals and organisations and (ii) the Commission's area manpower boards; and what the reason is for disclosure or non-disclosure in each instance.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985 c. *18-19*]: It is the practice of the Manpower Services Commission to disclose statistical information on fatalities and major and minor injuries arising out of accidents to trainees on the youth training scheme. In addition, area manpowr boards are provided with information about individual severe and fatal accidents but normally without disclosing identifying details which might prejudice any subsequent legal proceedings.

ENERGY

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether, pursuant to the answer, *Official Report*, columns *355-56*, 18 February, he will list *(a)* the precise dates on which the safeguard proposals to Euratom, covering Sellafield and Springfield mixed civil-military sites were made, *(b)* the text of the proposals referred to above and *(c)* any written response Euratom has made to either proposal.

Mr. Goodlad: Proposals for Sellafield and Springfields were put to Euratom on 26 February 1981 and 24 August 1982 respectively; as yet we have received no written response from Euratom to these proposals, but as I stated in my reply of 18 February 1985 to the hon. Member we are engaged in discussions with the Commission.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if, pursuant to the answer on nuclear safeguards, *Official Report*, 18 February, column *353*, he will explain what is meant by routine declarations made about United Kingdom facilities to Euratom;

(2) whether, pursuant to the answer, 18 February, *Official Report*, column *353*, he will give details of the other safeguard activities to which he referred in setting out the activities his Department undertakes in order to fulfil the obligations with regard to nuclear materials accountancy and nuclear materials safeguards.

Mr. Goodlad: Under Commission Regulation (Euratom) No. 3227/76 the following information is to be communicated regularly to the Commission by each undertaking using nuclear material:

(i) an annual outline programme of activities;
(ii) programmes for taking physical inventories and for reactor shutdown;
(iii) monthly inventory change reports — showing all movements of nuclear material into and out of each material balance area;
(iv) material balance reports and physical inventory listings for each material balance area;
(v) advance notification of exports and imports.

Other safeguards activities undertaken by operators of United Kingdom nuclear facilities involve:

(a) provision of the information listed above;
(b) provision to Euratom of the technical characteristics of facilities;
(c) preparation for, and implementation of procedures for, inspection of the facilities by Commission inspectors on a regular basis.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Industrial Revenue Bonds

Mr. Freeman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations have been made to the Government on the relative merits of introducing legislation to permit the issuance of tax-free industrial revenue bonds to finance new business development.

Mr. Peter Rees: Over the years my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations about industrial revenue bonds.

Wages and Employment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent the increase in net exports and expenditure by companies referred to in paragraph 4.04 of his paper on wages and employment would offset the whole of the initial fall in private consumption in his studies and simulations; if he will publish the relevant figures in the *Official Report*; and if he will set out information predicted by these studies and simulations on the changes in the figures for manufacturing output, investment in plant and machinery, total investment and trade in manufactures.

Mr. Peter Rees: The effects on net trade, company sector and personal sector expenditure, and private consumption in simulations of lower real wages under various assumptions about fiscal and monetary policy are contained in tables A to D of annex B of the recent paper by Treasury officials on "The Relationship between Employment and Wages". The other information requested by the hon. Gentleman is shown in the following table.

Simulated effects of lower nominal wages Unchanged nominal framework†*

£ million 1980 prices changes from base	Total investment	Investment machi
Year		
1	220	
2	930	-
3	940	
4	760	

Percentage changes from base	Manufacturing output	United Kingdom exports of manufactures volume‖	in manu
Year			
1	0·2	0·2	
2	1·1	0·7	
3	1·1	0·6	
4	1·1	0·6	

* Nominal wages are reduced to the extent necessary to red wages by 2 per cent.

† Unchanged money supply (average of MO and £M3); un PSBR/GDP ratio achieved by varying income tax; unchang limited expenditure in real terms.

‡ Excluding shipping and air transport industries.

‖ Excluding erratics, 1980 prices.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor Exchequer what are the estimated margins of error re to in paragraphs 4.02 and 4.03 of his paper relationship between wages and employment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The margins of error referre paragraph 4.02 of the paper can be derived fro estimated standard errors of the employment fun corresponding to the real wage elasticities of −½ an These are contained in the studies by Nickell and An (1983) and Layard and Nickell (1984) respectivel estimates of the margins of error in simulations Treasury model are available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor Exchequer what were the elasticities of dema imports and exports of manufactures used in his simu of the relationship between wages and employment

Mr. Peter Rees: In the Treasury model the dema exports of manufactures is measured by the level of trade and the demand for imports of manufactur various domestic activity variables (manufacturing o stockbuilding, consumers' expenditure on clo durable, and other goods, and investment in machinery and vehicles). Details of the elastici exports of manufactures with respect to world trade in the simulation can be found on page 6 of Gover Economic Service working paper No. 71, "Her Maj Treasury Macro-Economic Model: Supplement t 1982 Technical Manual". Details of the import elast can be found on pages 45 to 48 of "Her Majesty's Tre Macro-economic Model Technical Manual 1982". C of both publications are in the House of Commons Li

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor Exchequer what is the nature of the increase in con expenditure referred to in table 2 of his paper on wage employment; and if he will publish a detailed break in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Peter Rees: The increase in company expenditure referred to in table 2 of the paper on wages and employment consists of investment and stockbuilding. The breakdown is shown below. Columns do not sum to the total because of rounding.

£ billion rounded to nearest 0·1 billion

Year	*Private sector investment*	*Stockbuilding*
1	0·1	0·1
2	0·7	0·4
3	0·8	0·2
4	0·6	0·1

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the items listed in table 3 of his paper on the relationship between wages and unemployment a breakdown for each year covered by the simulation; and if he will add figures for the exchange rate, long-term interest rates, and purchases of gilt-edged stock.

Mr. Peter Rees: Most of the information requested is contained in tables A and C of Annex B in the paper by Treasury officials on "The Relationship between Employment and Wages". Additional information is shown in the following table.

The hon. Gentleman should also note that there is an error in table 3 of the paper. The figure for "Real Wage Bill" in the second column should read −1·4 and *not* −0·4.

Simulated effects of lower nominal wages: Alternative policy assumptions†*

Fiscal	*Unchanged PSBR/GDP ratio*	*Unchanged tax rates*
Monetary	*Unchanged money supply*	*Unchanged interest rates*
Nominal GDP		
Year 1	−1·2	−1·9
Year 2	−1·1	−4·0
Year 3	−1·5	−4·4
Year 4	−1·4	−4·4
Real wage bill		
Year 1	−1·9	−2·4
Year 2	−1·2	−2·6
Year 3	−0·9	−1·6
Year 4	−0·5	−1·2
PSBR (percentage of GDP)		
Year 1	0	0·7
Year 2	0	−0·1
Year 3	0	−0·2
Year 4	0	−0·4
Money supply (average of M0 and £M3)		
Year 1	0	−2·1
Year 2	0	−2·8
Year 3	0	−2·1
Year 4	0	−3·7
Long-term interest rates		
Year 1	−0·4	−0·1
Year 2	−0·3	−0·4
Year 3	−0·2	−0·5
Year 4	−0·2	−0·2

* Nominal wages are reduced to the extent necessary to reduce real wages by 2 per cent.

† Defined as follows:

Fiscal: Unchanged PSBR/GDP ratio achieved by varying income tax; also unchanged cash-limited expenditure in real terms.
Unchanged tax rates and cash-limited expenditure in real terms.

Monetary: Unchanged money supply achieved by varying interest rates.
Unchanged short-term nominal interest rates.

‡ Aggregate wages deflated by the RPI.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on 21 February, *Official Report*, column 568, giving statistical information about public expenditure, if he will reproduce the table showing the indices, where appropriate, in real terms.

Mr. Peter Rees: The indices in real terms based on 1978-79=100 are as follows:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
(a) *Public expenditure	100	102	104	106	108
(b) Index of Industrial Production	103	94	93	95	98
(c) ‡Wages and salaries and Income from employment	102	100	96	97	99
(d) †Expenditure on social security benefits	102	105	117	123	124
(e) ‡Revenue from Income Tax	94	93	100	100	98
(f) ‡Revenue from National Insurance Contributions	99	100	103	111	120

* See Table 2.6 of Cmnd 9428
† Using the RPI as the deflator
‡ Using the GDP at market prices deflator

Investment Income

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the loss of tax revenue if the investment income of husband and wife were taxed independently is attributable to persons over retirement age.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *402*]: This would depend on the particular regime for independent taxation of the investment income of husband and wife. My reply of 5 February 1985, c. *522*, provided an estimate of £320 million as the total cost at 1984-85 levels for the income election described in paragraphs 46 to 50 of the Green Paper "The Taxation of Husband and Wife" (Cmnd. 8093). About £110 million of this is in respect of taxpayers over 65.

Family Income

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answers to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) of 6 February 1984, *Official Report*, columns *439-42* and 15 February 1984, *Official Report*, columns *203-4*, concerning income statistics, to show net earnings at the lowest decile, median and highest decile of the earnings distribution for each year since 1978 for different household types, using constant April 1984 prices; and whether he will also give the same information for the following additional household types: *(a)* a married couple with two children, where one partner works full-time and the other part-time and *(b)* a married couple with both partners in full-time work.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, *c. 403*]: Information in the following tables is based on estimates of earnings for those in full time work p adult rates (with pay unaffected by absence). The answers were based on earnings of full time males ov Estimates are based on information from the Earnings Surveys."

Income tax rates and allowances for April 197 those specified in the Finance Act 1979, later replac those announced in June 1979; for other Aprils, th the rates and allowances for the financial year immec following. Taxpayers are assumed to have no reli allowances other than the appropriate personal allow National insurance contributions are at the contrac rate.

The calculations take no account of means- benefits to which those at the lowest decile m entitled. Changes in the purchasing power of net ea have been calculated by reference to movements general index of retail prices between Aprils.

Earnings after income tax, National Insurance Contributions and Child Benefit

	At current prices £	*At constant (April 1984) prices* £	*At constant prices (April 1978=100)*	*At current prices* £	*At constant (April 1984) prices* £	*At constant (April 197*
		Single man			*Married man*	
At the lowest decile gross earnings						
April 1978	39·35	70·71	100·0	42·84	76·98	
April 1979	44·09	71·98	101·8	47·90	78·20	
April 1980	53·47	71·70	101·4	57·92	77·66	
April 1981	57·67	69·02	97·6	62·11	74·34	
April 1982	61·95	67·76	95·8	67·03	73·32	
April 1983	66·91	70·37	99·5	72·73	76·50	
April 1984	74·43	74·43	105·3	81·07	81·07	
At the median of gross earnings						
April 1978	56·29	101·15	100·0	59·78	107·42	
April 1979	63·94	104·39	103·2	67·75	110·60	
April 1980	78·52	105·29	104·1	82·96	111·24	
April 1981	85·56	102·39	101·2	90·00	107·71	
April 1982	93·00	101·73	100·6	98·8	107·28	
April 1983	100·64	105·85	104·6	106·47	111·97	
April 1984	116·19	116·19	114·9	122·82	122·82	
At the highest decile of gross earnings						
April 1978	85·50	153·64	100·0	88·99	159·92	
April 1979	96·89	158·17	102·9	100·70	164·39	
April 1980	123·64	165·78	107·9	128·08	171·74	
April 1981	139·36	166·79	108·6	143·81	172·10	
April 1982	151·76	166·00	108·0	156·84	171·55	
April 1983	165·83	174·41	113·5	171·66	180·53	
April 1984	196·55	196·55	127·9	203·18	203·18	
	*Married man with two children**			*Married man with four children†*		
At the lowest decile gross earnings						
April 1978	48·71	87·53	100·0	55·15	99·11	
April 1979	55·90	91·26	104·3	63·90	104·32	
April 1980	65·92	88·38	101·0	73·92	99·11	
April 1981	71·61	85·70	97·9	81·11	97·07	
April 1982	77·53	84·80	96·9	88·03	96·29	
April 1983	84·43	88·80	101·4	96·13	101·11	
April 1984	94·07	94·07	107·5	107·07	107·07	
At the median of gross earnings						
April 1978	65·65	117·97	100·0	72·15	129·66	
April 1979	75·75	—	—	83·75	136·72	
April 1980	90·96	121·97	103·4	98·96	132·70	
April 1981	99·50	119·08	100·9	109·00	130·45	
April 1982	108·58	118·77	100·7	119·08	130·25	
April 1983	118·17	124·28	105·3	129·87	136·58	
April 1984	135·82	135·82	115·1	148·82	148·82	
At the highest decile of gross earnings						
April 1978	94·86	170·46	100·0	101·36	182·15	
April 1979	108·70	—	—	116·70	190·51	

	At current prices £	At constant (April 1984) prices £	At constant prices (April 1978=100)	At current prices £	At constant (April 1984) prices £	At constant prices (April 1978=100)
April 1980	136·08	182·46	107·0	144·08	193·19	106·1
April 1981	153·31	183·47	107·6	162·81	194·84	107·0
April 1982	167·34	183·04	107·4	177·84	194·52	106·8
April 1983	183·36	192·84	113·1	195·06	205·15	112·6
April 1984	216·18	216·18	126·8	229·18	229·18	125·8
	Married man with two children (wife‡ working part-time)*			*Married (both partners‖ working full-time)*		
At the lowest decile gross earnings						
April 1978	70·43	126·57	100·0	72·08	129·54	100·0
April 1979	80·04	130·67	103·2	80·68	131·71	101·7
April 1980	95·35	127·86	101·0	97·47	130·70	100·9
April 1981	103·57	123·96	97·9	105·15	125·85	97·2
April 1982	111·79	122·28	96·6	113·29	123·93	95·7
April 1983	122·12	128·44	101·5	123·41	129·80	100·2
April 1984	131·89	138·71	109·6	133·29	140·18	108·2
At the median of gross earnings						
April 1978	87·37	157·01	100·0	98·76	177·49	100·0
April 1979	99·89	163·07	103·9	111·29	181·68	102·4
April 1980	120·40	161·44	102·8	137·00	183·71	103·5
April 1981	131·46	157·33	100·2	149·48	178·89	100·8
April 1982	142·84	156·25	99·5	162·60	177·86	100·2
April 1983	155·85	163·92	104·4	177·46	186·64	105·2
April 1984	169·47	178·23	113·5	192·88	202·86	114·3
At the highest decile of gross earnings						
April 1978	116·58	209·50	100·0	146·41	263·12	100·0
April 1979	132·84	216·86	103·5	162·16	264·73	100·6
April 1980	165·52	221·94	105·9	208·60	279·70	106·3
April 1981	185·27	221·72	105·8	235·81	282·22	107·3
April 1982	201·60	220·52	105·3	254·13	277·98	105·6
April 1983	221·04	232·48	111·0	278·56	292·97	111·3
April 1984	241·78	254·29	121·4	302·48	318·13	120·9

* Both children under 11.
† Two children under 11, one child 11-15, one child over 16.
‡ Assuming the wife earns the average for part-time women.
‖ Assuming husband and wife have earnings at the same quantile of the earnings distribution for full time males and full time females respectively.

Employees (Company Shares)

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation whereby employers offering approved share option provisions may have the right to buy back employees' shares when their employment comes to an end.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. 211]: I have noted my hon Friend's suggestion.

Inland Revenue Staff

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, on what dates the last two reviews of arrangements for emergency staffing in the Inland Revenue took place.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. 261]: When the present standing arrangements were introduced in January 1979, it was provided that any material changes in the numbers of essential staff requiring emergency heating and lighting would be notified as they occurred to the Property Services Agency. There have however been so many changes in Revenue offices in recent years that it was deemed advisable to re-issue the instructions relating to essential staff. This was done in January 1985.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, whether the arrangements for emergency staff in the Inland Revenue are reviewed at national or regional level in so far as they affect district offices.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *261*]: Instructions on the calculation of numbers of essential staff in connection with the provision of emergency heating and lighting are issued by regional offices.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, why the regional controller, north-west, Inland Revenue, in a letter to district officers referred to staff levels in an emergency such as a dispute in the power industry leading to electricity cuts or a tanker drivers strike.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. 261]: All Inland Revenue offices have standing instructions, dating from January 1979, to follow in the event of an emergency. These include the determination of essential staffing levels requiring emergency heating and lighting in the event of interruptions to power supplies.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security (Equality of Treatment)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many claims by *(a)* married women and *(b)* cohabiting women, under the directive on equal

treatment for men and women in social security matters, have been successful; and what are the four most common reasons for refusal;

(2) how many claims have been made to his Department by *(a)* married women and *(b)* cohabiting women, on behalf of a couple under the directive on equal treatment for men and women in social security matters.

Mr. Whitney: In the case of supplementary benefit, by January 1985 14,300 claims had been made by married and co-habiting women, of which about 5,800 were successful. No records are kept of the reason for refusal, but the reason would be either that the couple's income was too high for the claim to succeed or that the woman failed to qualify to be the claimant under the conditions set out in the Supplementary Benefit (Aggregation) Regulations. In addition, in about 2,500 cases there had been a change of claimant to the woman partner.

In the case of family income supplement, it is estimated that by January 1985 about 10,000 claims had been made by married and co-habiting women, of which about 3,000 were successful. The four main reasons for refusal are that (1) the claimant's partner was only temporarily not in work; (2) earnings were in excess of the prescribed amount; (3) the claimant was not in full-time work; and (4) the couple had no dependent children.

The records do not distinguish between married and co-habiting women.

In the case of national insurance benefits it is regretted that no information is available because of industrial action by computer staff.

Heroin Addiction

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional measures are being considered to combat heroin addiction.

Mr. John Patten: Government measures against drug misuse were outlined in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 31 January at column *243*. The education and prevention campaign referred to in that reply was launched on 27 February.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much is spent annually to combat drug abuse.

Mr. John Patten: The cost of services to combat drug abuse are not identified separately in the accounts of health authorities or estimated costs of family practitioner services. Under a central funded initiative an additional £10 million is available over three years for projects providing services for drug misusers. Also £2 million has been allocated for a major education and prevention campaign which was launched on 27 February.

Mobility Allowance

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Wales were in receipt of mobility allowance in 1983 and 1984; in what age groups; and how many people applied but were refused, or failed to qualify.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows:

	1983
Number of recipients (at end of year)	23,700
Number of claims (disallowed during year)	5,000

I regret that the information requested about a is not available.

Kidney Donor Cards

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Se State for Social Services how many kidney do were issued in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 19

Mr. John Patten: Kidney donor cards were after 1981. They were succeeded by multi-or which allowed potential donors to indicate whi they were willing to donate. The number of ca by the Department since 1980 has been as follo

	Kidney	*Multi-organ*	
1980	11,211,000	6,144,000	17
1981	1,654,900	16,817,800	18
1982	—	1,100,000	1
1983	—	1,822,200	1
1984	—	12,615,000	12

Private Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State f Services how many private residential care ho been de-registered since 1 January.

Mr. John Patten: No notifications have beer since 1 January 1985.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of Social Services if he will publish in the *Officia* for November 1982, 1983 and 1984 the unemployment benefit for *(a)* a single person married couple as a percentage of average ear male manual workers in Wales.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is the table. The figures are based on estimated earnings for male manual workers in Wales, deri the "New Earnings Survey" for April each interpolation using the Department of Empl monthly indices of average earnings in Great Figures for November 1984 are provisional.

November of	*Single Person*	*Ma Co*
1982	18·2	
1983	18·6	
1984	18·2	

General Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of Social Services if he will publish in the *Officia* the information known to him, for each of the years, where general practitioners' surgeries h closed for failing to reach acceptable standards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is no specific close the practice premises of a general practitioner where they are not deemed by

practioner committee to be proper and sufficient. Such a matter would fall to be dealt with under the Service Committees and Tribunal Regulations 1974.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is taking steps to seek to improve the standards of general practitioner records and to seek to ensure their maintenance and in a form which facilitates linkage with hospital records and those kept by other health workers in the community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: General medical practitioners are required under their terms of service to keep adequate records of the illnesses and treatment of their patients on forms supplied for the purpose by the family practitioner committees. We are currently studying the requirements for exchanges between family practitioner services and hospital and community health services. We are also considering in the light of the recent report of the collaboration working party ways in which GPs and others in the health service can improve communications and the shared use of information, whilst respecting and protecting the confidentiality of health information.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to introduce a compulsory retirement age for general practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are still considering this question.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that the full costs of attendance of general practitioners receptionists at training courses are now met by the family practitioner committee or health authority concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under the provisions of the statement of fees and allowances a general medical practitioner is eligible to receive by way of direct reimbursement 70 per cent. of the cost of sending a member of his staff on a course specifically designed for the training of receptionists and organised by one of the approved bodies. The balance of the cost is indirectly reimbursed on an average basis through the expenses element in the gross capitation and other fees paid to the general practitioner. To the best of my knowledge all family practitioner committees comply with these arrangements.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the efficiency of general practitioners in recording the incidence of notifiable diseases.

Mr. John Patten: We have no evidence to suggest that the arrangements for reporting notifiable diseases are not working efficiently.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to remove the statutory obligation on medical practitioner committees to make appointments to single-handed general practitioner posts even if no suitable applicant is available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not aware of any particular problem which has arisen under the present arrangements, which have existed for many years. We will, however, consider the need to remove this obligation from the Medical Practices Committee when a suitable opportunity arises.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is monitoring the activities of family practitioner committees and health authorities in discharging their duties to ensure that patients are seen by their general practitioners in surgeries of an acceptable standard.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The terms of service of general medical practitioners require them to provide proper and sufficient accommodation at their practice premises and it is for the family practitioner committee to judge whether this obligation is met in individual cases. We issued further guidance to FPC's on the discharge of these responsibilities in December 1984. It allowed a withholding or abatement of rent and rates reimbursement where premises do not reach an acceptable standard. We shall be reviewing the effects of introducing the revised standards at the end of this year. Surgery accommodation in health centres is mainly a matter for health authorities and, with few exceptions, it is of an acceptable standard.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is taking steps to introduce a system similar to the Scottish system for recording all information about the dental treatment of children in England.

Mr. John Patten: The systems for recording information about the dental treatment of children in the General Dental Services are already similar in England and Scotland. Because of the substantially larger number of estimate forms involved, however, it is not possible at present for the Dental Estimates Board in England to link the forms relating to individual children when they have been treated by more than one dental practice. The possibility of achieving such linkage is however under consideration. In the Community Dental Service returns are made in Scotland for each individual course of treatment whereas in England statistics are aggregated. The provision of statistics in the community dental service is being examined as part of the overall review of Health Service information.

Health Education Council

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the funds his Department has made available to the Health Education Council for each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The Health Education Council is funded jointly by the Department, the Welsh Office and the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland. Total Government funds allocated to the Council for each of the past five years are as follows, with the Department's contribution shown in brackets.

	£ million	*£ million*
1981-82	5·0	(4·7)
1981-82	6·6	(6·1)
1982-83	8·6	(7·9)
1983-84	9·3	(8·6)
1984-85	9·6	(8·9)

This represents a rise of 89·4 per cent. in the Department's contribution over the five years.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total annual

Government funding for the Health Education Council in each of the years since its formation; and for what purposes these funds are intended.

Mr. John Patten: Total Government funds allocated to the Health Education Council in each of the years since it was set up are as follows:

	£ million
1968-69*	0·1
1969-70	0·2
1970-71	0·3
1971-72	0·6
1972-73	0·8
1973-74	1·6
1974-75	1·0
1975-76	1·7
1976-77	1·5
1977-78	3·1
1978-79	3·7
1979-80	4·5
1980-81	5·0
1981-82	6·6
1982-83	8·6
1983-84	9·3
1984-85	9·6

* Seven months.

The Council undertakes a wide variety of health education programmes and carries out the planning and promotion of health education activity at national level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Sodium Valproate

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any measures have been taken to warn physicians and surgeons who may have cause to prescribe sodium valproate in any of its forms of its possible adverse effects associated with *(a)* emotional upset, *(b)* psychosis, *(c)* hyperactivity, *(d)* aggression and *(e)* behavioural problems.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, but as I mentioned in my reply to the hon. Member on 29 January at columns *167-8* changes to the data sheet for Epilim (sodium valproate) to include information for prescribers on psychiatric adverse reactions associated with the product are being considered by the licence holder in consultation with the licensing authority. A revised data sheet should be issued soon.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent evaluation has been carried out by the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the use of sodium valproate; and if he will publish its latest findings.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Committee on Safety of Medicines constantly monitors reports of adverse reactions associated with sodium valproate and assesses whether action on its safety is required. The latest information from the committee on the safety of this drug was contained in the January 1983 edition of "Current Problems" which was issued by the Committee to doctors and pharmacists in the United Kingdom. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans he now has for the disposal of 21 national reassessment centres;

(2) which organisations, including local a service departments and voluntary organi been approached with a view to the purchas buildings occupied by the national reassess

(3) what alternative opportunities w available to those who presently reside in reassessment centres.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Membe hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 5 February 1985 at co The process of consultation to decide alternative provision is just beginning and we to add to that reply.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretar Social Services (1) what savings he estimate *(b)* running costs, *(c)* repair costs and *(d)* the of buildings from the closure of 21 national centres;

(2) if he will list the animals now cared f reassessment centres; and what plans he location following the closure of the centre

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Membe as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretar Social Services what organisations he co responsible for the provision of help for youn use the national reassessment centres.

Mr. Whitney: Young people are n admitted to resettlement units which are homeless people without a settled way of life are admitted special attention is given to th may be assisted to return home or referred agencies for young people. The consultatio is just beginning will consider forms of provision for people without a settled way o early to say which organisations will e involved in making that provision.

Re-establishment Centres

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretar Social Services what alternative training p provided in place of the 500 training places in Government reassessment centres.

Mr. Whitney: Re-establishment centres v to restore work habits and confidence in p employability had deteriorated as a result unemployment. In recent years increasing also been made by the Manpower Services C help people who have not worked for a long have fallen out of the routine of work. increased provision furnishes opportunities individuals who would previously have establishment centres. The community provides 130,000 places and many projects by organisations with a particular conc disadvantaged people. The voluntary project currently supports about 300 projects design unemployed people with constructive activiti help them to find work or obtain tra preparation training, designed to help unemp become more employable and trainable, is for some 23,000 people in 1984-85 and it is

by 1986-87, 50,000 of those who participate in the community programme should be able to receive work preparation and basic skills training. In addition, long-term unemployed people who are disabled or who have a health problem which limits the type of work they can do can be considered for a course of employment rehabilitation.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he will make available the 1983 estimated figures for the take-up of social security benefits;

(2) if he will conduct a survey into the amount of housing benefit that goes unclaimed.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates of the take-up of supplementary benefit and free welfare milk in 1983 are expected to be available later this year. It is hoped that an estimate of the take-up of one parent benefit in 1983 can be made by the end of this year. So far as family income supplement is concerned, it is hoped that an estimate of take-up based on 1983 and 1984 family expenditure survey data will be available early in 1986. Because of the introduction of housing benefit it is difficult to use the family expenditure survey data collected during 1983 to obtain reliable estimates of housing benefit take-up. I will however write to the hon. Member about this. We expect to be able to make estimates of the take-up of housing benefit for 1984 early next year. These estimates will include some information on about the amount of unclaimed housing benefit.

Heating Additions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will conduct a survey into the take-up of heating additions by *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* others.

Mr. Whitney: No. I refer the hon. Member however to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) on 25 February at column *75*, which I indicated the measures taken by the Government to promote take-up. In December 1983 about 60 per cent. of supplementary benefit claimants were getting heating additions compared with about 53 per cent. in December 1978 and we estimate that over 90 per cent. of supplementary pensioners now get heating additions compared with about 71 per cent. in December 1978. We expect to spend some £140 million more in real terms on heating additions this financial year than was spent in 1978-79.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the results of his review of the operation of the formula for exceptionally severe weather allowances.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my ho Friend's reply to him on 18 January at column *261*. W shall announce the conclusions of our review of soci security benefits within the next few months.

Educational Videos

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Sta for Social Services what was the total amount spent b *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Health Education Counc on contributions towards the production of education videos in each of the last three years for which figures a available.

Mr. John Patten: The total amount spent by t Department and the Health Education Council on t production of educational films-videos over the last thr years is as follows:

	DHSS	*Health Education Council*
	£	£
1982-83	176,300	70,000
1983-84	97,300	28,000
1984-85	121,100	25,000

In addition, over the period 1982 to 1984 the Counc contributed £230,000 to the production of eight televisi programmes on nutrition for Channel Four, from whi videos have been produced for use by health workers a schools.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Sta for Social Services what was the total amount spent by (his Department and *(b)* the Health Education Council the purchase and distribution of educational videos in ea of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: Neither the Department nor t Health Education Council purchases outside educatio films-videos. The total amount spent on distribution ov the last three years is as follows:

	DHSS	*Health Education Council*
	£	£
1982-83	28,700	6,000
1983-84	27,000	7,319
1984-85*	8,100	35,000

* Estimated to the end of the financial year.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Sta for Social Services if he will list the titles and produce of all educational videos whose production has be wholly or in part sponsored by *(a)* his Department and the Health Education Council in each of the last three yea for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows:

Title		*Producer*
1982-83		
"People Like Us"	(mental handicap nursing)	DHSS
"Illusions"	(solvent abuse)	DHSS
"Better to Give"	(blood donation)	DHSS for the National Blood Transfusion Service

Title		*Producer*
"In the Middle"		
"Losing Out"		
"Happy Birthday"		
"Rounds"	(alcoholism)	Health Education Council
"Rules of the Game"		
"Up to You"		
1983-84		
"No Good Just Feeling Sorry"	(mental handicap nursing)	DHSS
"Do You Know What You're Eating?"		
"Sweet Persuasion"		
"Teeth—Who Cares?"	(dental health)	Health Education Council
"What Will You Have"		
1984-85		
"In Good Hands"	(general nursing)	DHSS
"Be Prepared: Be Happy"	(Asian mother and baby film)	DHSS for Asian Mother and Baby Campaign
1984-85		
Occupational Health for NHS Workers	(provisional title)	Health Education Council

"Let's Talk About Love"

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the Health Education Council declined to make any contribution towards the production or distribution costs of the recently released video produced by the organisation Family and Youth Concern, entitled "Let's Talk About Love"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The video film "Let's Talk about Love" was produced by the research and education trust of The Responsible Society. I understand that the Health Education Council, in considering an approach for help in funding the production, asked for certain changes in the proposed script. The Responsible Society decided however to proceed without the Council's assistance.

NHS (Drugs)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value on average of National Health Service drugs prescribed in the last full year for which figures are available by *(a)* dispensing doctors and *(b)* general practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *274*]: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev Martin Smyth) on 11 February at column *79*.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 4 March 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Secrets Act

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General if, under the provisions of section 36(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1972, he will seek the opinion of the Court of Appeal on the point of law which arises on the judicial interpretation in the Ponting case of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

The Attorney-General: No.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer on 18 February about the number of outstanding right-to-buy applications, *Official Report*, column *335*, what action he is taking to ensure Welwyn Hatfield district and other local authorities speed up their processing.

Sir George Young: The figures for outstanding right-to-buy applications shown in the *Official Report*, at column *335*, are taken from statistical returns provided by local authorities. Welwyn Hatfield has subsequently amended its figures to show that as at March 1984 there were 1,160 outstanding cases (not 1,558). These figures can, however, only be used as a very crude indicator of possible delays in processing applications because they do not distinguish between cases awaiting action by the tenant or the authority, and in 761 of the 1,044 outstanding cases at March 1984 applicants had received their section 10 notice (which notifies them of the price of the dwelling) but had neither accepted the offer nor withdrawn their application.

While we have no reason to consider that tenants of Welwyn Hatfield are currently experiencing delays in the processing of their right-to-buy applications, where delays do arise, or are suspected, the Department takes this up with the authority concerned and, where appropriate, monitors monthly progress in detail.

Empty Dwellings (Greater London)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated annual loss of rents from public sector empty dwellings in Greater London and in each of its component boroughs and the City in each of the last six years.

Sir George Young: On the basis of information provided by local authorities in their housing subsidy claim forms, the figures for 1980-81 to 1984-85 are set out as follows. They take no account of the cost of housing benefit which would have been payable to tenants. Information for earlier years is not available.

Rent loss on void dwellings—Greater London

	1980-81 £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	**1984-85* £
Greater London Council	3,489,193	3,550,176	1,474,160	1,332,764	1,300,000
City of London	18,432	24,105	34,325	118,653	120,397
Camden	1,482,065	867,482	877,983	1,049,848	1,147,030
Greenwich	328,478	796,118	707,720	675,000	700,000
Hackney	309,951	759,000	2,250,000	2,616,087	2,616,087
Hammersmith and Fulham	649,350	945,686	1,192,099	1,061,034	880,000
Islington	1,280,127	1,506,410	2,031,845	1,840,901	1,642,545
Kensington and Chelsea	128,408	192,387	252,971	218,738	232,000
Lambeth	659,823	760,426	1,842,333	2,212,290	2,290,000
Lewisham	818,736	983,513	1,236,355	1,748,505	2,100,000
Southwark	1,886,208	2,682,478	3,273,795	3,061,962	2,851,336
Tower Hamlets	316,411	950,501	1,038,367	1,083,932	553,000
Wandsworth	1,328,671	2,351,184	2,151,085	1,723,127	1,909,000
Westminster	350,000	495,500	500,000	729,635	700,000
Barking and Dagenham	210,751	384,478	465,146	384,717	382,842
Barnet	307,954	334,129	422,961	493,445	425,770
Bexley	101,676	112,702	155,152	159,117	133,110
Brent	379,488	450,040	573,673	772,596	768,810
Bromley	177,004	307,112	318,936	353,867	350,000
Croydon	165,368	255,000	261,649	353,879	373,840
Ealing	382,500	753,822	491,669	342,851	343,000
Enfield	181,325	208,024	324,490	482,481	506,900
Haringey	673,777	745,746	901,644	1,028,163	1,100,000
Harrow	56,986	137,597	175,103	214,092	215,000
Havering	342,846	467,490	554,414	496,265	498,500
Hillingdon	469,780	640,023	432,352	370,785	385,800
Hounslow	231,821	269,476	366,175	376,562	300,000
Kingston-upon-Thames	78,947	136,255	174,736	187,559	135,700
Merton	271,400	330,000	320,681	381,962	475,240
Newham	593,616	556,850	1,080,012	1,989,448	1,253,000
Redbridge	127,003	194,000	288,609	306,799	302,000
Richmond-upon-Thames	66,222	103,336	119,447	151,542	122,300

	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	*1984-
Sutton	257,186	196,940	174,385	210,270	270,9
Waltham Forest	248,346	487,609	485,563	489,137	514,0
TOTALS	18,369,849	23,935,595	26,949,835	29,018,013	27,898,1

* 1984-85 figures are local authority estimates.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated annual loss of rates from empty dwellings in (i) the private sector and (ii) the public sector in each of the boroughs in Greater London and in the City of London in each of the last six years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The estimates total annual loss of rates on collection for each local authority is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in its annual publication 'Rate Collection Statistics' (the latest edition relates to 1982-83). Separate figures for private and public sectors are not available centrally.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many official gipsy sites have been established on green belt land since the passing of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government that where official gipsy sites exist on green belt land, the occupants are allowed to carry on businesses from those sites.

Mr. Macfarlane: The management of official sites is a matter for the responsible local authorities, which will normally define in their tenancy agreements the activities that may be carried on upon such sites, having regard to the terms of any planning permission granted or deemed to have been granted for the use of the land.

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government for official gipsy sites to be established within the green belt.

Mr. Macfarlane: Local authorities are advised in DOE circular 28/77 that it may be necessary to accept the establishment of gipsy sites in areas of open land (including green belts) particularly where they come close to urban fringes in order to prevent unauthorised camping in far less suitable places. They are also advised of their special obligation to ensure that the arguments in favour of departing from the development plan are convincing.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reason the Adam Smith Institute was included amongst the list of organisations from which comments have been invited on the paper, "Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services."

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: It is normal practice to circulate consultation papers to organisations which have either expressed or have a known interest in the subject matter.

Disabled Persons (Building Regulations)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for th Environment when he intends to lay before the House statutory instrument amending building regulations t cover facilities for disabled people.

Mr. Gow: I intend to lay before the House before th end of this month a statutory instrument amending th building regulations so as to require the provision of acces for disabled people to all new shops and offices and to nev single storey public buildings.

General Needs Housing Association

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary o State for the Environment how many tenanted houses o General Needs Housing Association houses have been sol to sitting tenants in England with a discount; and wha proportion this is in percentage terms and numbers of th total stock of General Needs Housing Association houses

Sir George Young: No information is held centrally or housing associations sales completed in England with a discount on market valuation. However, between April 1979 and September 1984, 6,910 housing association dwellings were sold to sitting tenants in England, representing 1·7 per cent. of the housing associations' fair rent stock at 1 April 1984. In addition, 25,360 co-ownership sales were completed during that period.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has made, is conducting, plans to make, or is aware of, concerning the long range transport of pesticides in the atmosphere.

Mr. Waldegrave: The long-range transport in the atmosphere of some organo-chlorine pesticides is a recognised phenomenon. A report commissioned by my Department last year from the Institute of Offshore Engineering of Heriot-Watt university contained information of the aerial transport of organo-chlorine pesticides in the context of inputs of these and other substances into the North Sea. My Department is currently considering whether or not further research is needed to refine the estimates given in that report.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning a recent study by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States of the economic disbenefits of pesticide use; and what studies his Department has made, is conducting, or plans on this subject.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not clear to which report this question refers. My Department has not conducted studies in this area and has no plans to do so.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce environmental quality objectives for pesticide levels in air and water.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no evidence that ambient levels of pesticides in air are a cause for concern. Quality objectives would therefore be of little value. Quality objectives are, however, a well-recognised feature of our system for ensuring water quality. In the context of the EC Directive 84/491/EEC, environmental quality standards have been set for the isomers of hexachlorocyclohexane in water and the Council of Ministers is also considering proposals for similar directives covering DDT and related substances, pentachlorophenol and dieldrin, endrin and aldrin.

In addition, my Department is currently considering the need for quality standards in the aquatic environment appropriate to a range of quality objectives for a number of pesticides which are in the "grey list".

Derelict Land

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to be able to announce additional derelict land allocations for 1985-86 for uncommitted schemes which can be commenced in that financial year;

(2) if he plans any changes in the system of making derelict land allocations;

(3) what representations he has received regarding the present system of making derelict land grant allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend announced the derelict land grant allocations for 1985-86 on 7 February. Approvals for uncommitted schemes will be made in line with available resources and priorities. We are in constant touch with the local authorities and other bodies over various aspects of the derelict land grant programme. I have no immediate proposals to change the current system.

Local Government Structure

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a general study of the powers and duties of local government; if he will give consideration to extending single tier local government along the lines of his proposals for creating such a structure within the metropolitan areas; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government examined the statutory duties of local authorities very thoroughly shortly after taking office and there are no plans for a further fundamental review of the type which my hon. Friend appears to have in mind. The Government's conclusions about the structure of local government generally are set out in paragraph 1.5 of the White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" (Cmnd. 9063) published in October 1983.

Lindane

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what advice the Nature Conservancy Council gives to householders or wood treatment companies regarding the treatment of timbers in roof spaces with the pesticide Lindane where bats may be present;

(2) what studies his Department has made, plans, or is aware of, regarding the effects of the pesticide Lindane on bats in roof spaces;

(3) in which European countries Lindane is banned or restricted for use in treating timbers in occupied buildings.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Nature Conservancy Council recommends the use of synthetic pyrethroids such as permethrim and cypermethrin when timber preservation problems arise in houses where bats are present. Tests have shown that these to be as effective in controlling woodworm as the more common chemicals while remaining relatively harmless to bats.

Research undertaken by the Vincent Wildlife Trust at Aberdeen university, which indicates that Lindane is lethal to bats, has been of great assistance to the Nature Conservancy Council in formulating its advice given to householders and timber treatments companies. Lindane has been cleared for use within Great Britain under the pesticide safety precautions scheme but information regarding use within other European countries is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Housing Associations (London)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing association developments in London are *(a)* for black tenants and *(b)* for white tenants.

Sir George Young: This information is not available.

Rate Limitation Order

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received as to the estimated number of manual and officer grade posts which will be lost in the local authorities named in the Rate Limitation Order as a result of its implementation.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received no complete information of this kind. It is for each selected authority to decide how to live within its rate and precept limit.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are employed as *(a)* home helps, *(b)* street sweepers, *(c)* dustmen and *(d)* care attendants in each of the authorities listed in the Rate Limitation Order.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many school-leavers and apprentices were taken on by each of the local authorities listed for rate limitation in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not available centrally.

Refuse Services

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those authorities that have placed their refuse services out to private contractors; how many staff were employed at the date of privatisation; and what information he has as to the number subsequently employed by the contractor.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department does not collect systematic information on this subject but a list which includes known contracts for refuse services appears in the magazine *Contract Services*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the individuals and institutions he has invited to give evidence to his inquiry into local government finance.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: At this stage the local government finance studies are internal to the Department and we are therefore not engaged in formal consultation or taking of evidence. Where individuals or organisations have nevertheless expressed a wish to feed in their views, I have said that we are prepared to receive written material on an informal basis. Once proposals have been formulated there will of course, be full consultation before any question of legislation arises.

Olympic Games

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the implications for the construction industry of hosting the 1992 Olympic Games in the north west of England.

Mr. Macfarlane: Any such estimate would be premature in advance of the assessment by BOA officers referred to in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 25 February at column *61*.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the method by which fluoride is added to water supplies; what safeguards are involved; what variations in the method exist in different parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: About 95 per cent. of fluoridation plants use hexafluorosilicic acid supplied as a 20 per cent. solution in water; the remainder use disodium hexafluorosilicate supplied as a powder.

All the plants using the acid have a "day" tank which holds about one day's requirement of acid, and can be filled only once in any 24-hour period. At small waterworks the acid is diluted with water in an automatic failsafe chemical diluter. The acid or the diluted acid is them injected into the water by a dosage pump in proportion to the water flow through the works. The dosage pump is designed to work close to its maximum output. The majority of plants have an automatic continuously recording fluoride monitor which signals an alarm or stops fluoridation should the fluoride concentration in the water entering supply start to exceed a preset value of between 1·2 mg/l and 1·5 mg/l.

A few large manned works which store the water before supply rely on frequent manual sampling and analysis for fluoride.

There are thus three safeguards to ensure that consumers do not receive over-fluoridated water: the use of a "day" tank; a controlled dosing pump operating near its maximum capacity; and monitoring arrangements whether automatic or not.

Hampton Court Palace

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State f Environment whether he will make a statement c future use of empty apartments at Hampton Court p

Mr. Macfarlane: My Department, with the agre of the keeper of the Privy Purse, proposes to comm consultants to advise on the feasibility of le apartments in Fountain court at Hampton Court pal substantial companies. Twelve apartments are at p vacant and require major refurbishment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police Unit C11

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the H Department if he will call for a report from Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the e of investigations carried out by the Metropolitan p unit C11 into elected representatives of the people; a he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. In police investigations crime it is immaterial whether or not a person holds el office.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the H Department whether Metropolitan police unit investigations are limited solely to those suspecte involvement in major crime; and if he will list the cr where court proceedings have ensued with which i been involved in investigations since its inception.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The investigations to which branch contributes all concern very serious offences as homicides, sexual assaults, armed robberies, trafficking and arson. It would not be practicable to details of the cases in which prosecutions have res from investigations to which C11 branch has contrib

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the H Department to what factors he attributes the greater for experiments on living animals to test house substances in 1983 over 1982; and if he will ma statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have no information on this p additional to that contained in my reply to the Member's question of 4 February at column *376*.

Carr-Gomm Charity

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department how much money his Department given, either directly or indirectly, to the Carr-Go charity in each of the last three years.

Mr. Mellor: Grants totalling £4,525 in 1982 £12,948 in 1983-84 and £21,023 to date in 1984-85 h been paid in respect of beds reserved for ex-offende accommodation which the society provides in Lon East Anglia and Tyneside.

Drugs (Licence Fees)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department why he proposes under the Misus Drugs (Licence Fees) (Amendment) Regulations

(S.I., 1985, No. 138) to raise licence fees to doctors prescribing controlled drugs by 14 per cent.; what was the total income from fees collected under regulation 3(1) of the Misuse of Drugs (Licence Fees) Regulations 1979 in 1983-84; and to what purpose the money so collected is put.

Mr. Mellor: The current regulations would have the effect of increasing the fees for licences to produce, supply and possess controlled drugs for commercial purposes; they do not apply to doctors, who do not require a licence to prescribe controlled drugs (except when prescribing heroin, cocaine or dipipanone to an addict). In the financial year 1983-84 the total revenue from such fees amounted to approximately £203,000. In line with the Government's policy on fees, this revenue offsets the costs associated with operating the licensing system.

Cornwall (Electoral Districts)

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to confirm the electoral districts relevant to the Cornwall county council elections.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend made an order implementing the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's final proposals for new electoral arrangements for the county of Cornwall, with modifications, on 25 February 1985. The order will come into full operation at this year's county council elections in May.

Siren Warning (Lancashire)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the circumstances regarding the sounding of the four minute warning siren in north east Lancashire on Thursday 28 February.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The sirens were sounded because of a fault in the testing procedure during the installation of new equipment. The fault is now being remedied.

Sex Offenders (Treatment)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what treatments, psychological and physiological, are currently being administered to *(a)* people serving prison sentences for sex offences and *(b)* people convicted of sex offences who are currently on probation conditional upon receiving some form of medical or psychiatric treatment; and if any of these treatments is administered specifically to secure an early release from prison or as an alternative to a prison sentence;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government issued any guidelines on accepting requests from, or on behalf of, people convicted of sex offences for medical treatment to be administered instead of a prison sentence;

(3) what procedure exists to ensure that proper consent is obtained from prisoners, or people convicted of sex offences awaiting sentence, to medical treatment aimed as an alternative to prison custody;

(4) how many people convicted of sex offences are currently on probation conditional upon their receiving some form of medical or psychological therapy.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any members of the Home Office research unit have been involved, within the last three years, in the development of therapies such as behavioural therapy aimed at treating sex offenders.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Charities

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications the Charity Commissioners have received in each of the last five years for registration under the Charities Act 1960.

Mr. Mellor: I am informed by the Charity Commissioners that during the years 1980-84 the following number of applications for registration under the Charities Act 1960 were received:

	Number
1980	3,977
1981	3,548
1982	3,700
1983	3,701
1984	3,939

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charities have been deregistered by the Charity Commissioners in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of charities removed from the register of charities held by the Charity Commissioners is published in the annual report of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales each year. They were as follows:

	Number
1980	210
1981	254
1982	196
1983	190
*1984	126

* Not yet published.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the real exchange rate, measured in terms of export prices, for the main manufacturing countries listed in table F2 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" in (i) the fourth quarter of 1976, (ii) the first quarter of 1979 and (iii) the latest quarter in each case for which figures are available, together with the increase in the real value of sterling against each currency from the fourth quarter of 1976 to the latest available date.

Mr. Fletcher: The information is in the table.

*Relative export prices**
1980 = 100

United Kingdom compared with:	*1976 fourth quarter*	*1979 first quarter*	*1984 third quarter†*	*Percenta 1984 third 1976 fou*
United States of America	68	87	63	
France	79	90	102	
Federal Republic of Germany	73	83	104	
Italy	79	94	101	
Netherlands	72	88	104	
Belgium/Luxembourg	73	88	108	
Sweden	76	94	104	
Switzerland	79	88	96	
Canada	64	93	75	
Japan	70	81	80	

* Ratios of United Kingdom's unit value of exports of manufactures to each competitor's index, all in common currency terms.
† Provisional.
Source: United Nations.

Information Technology

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the number of British companies and universities currently being represented in information technology programmes being arranged by the European Community.

Mr. Butcher: The main information technology programme organised by the Community involving companies and universities is the European strategic programme for research and development in information technology (Esprit). The Community is also responsible for the regulation on Community actions in the field of microelectronic technology, and the multiannual data processing programme. Excluding the latter for which contracts have not yet been let, 31 United Kingdom companies, 19 academic institutions and seven other organisations (such as research associations) are currently participating in these programmes.

Alvey Programme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the production sectors that have chiefly benefited from the information technology Alvey programme and the level of controlled television cameras and digital telephone exchanges developed for Malawi.

Mr. Butcher: The Alvey programme is designed to promote long-term strategic research into key enabling information technologies rather than for specific production sectors. While much of the work will be of relevance for manufacturing industry, the microelectronics and computer sectors are those most directly affected.

As part of its contribution to world communications year in 1983 the United Kingdom Government arranged for the supply, installation and maintenance of three rural digital exchanges to the Malawi Department of Posts and Telecommunications. This Department is not aware of any United Kingdom involvement in the development or supply of controlled television cameras to Malawi.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications were submitted to his Department in 1984 for grants from the Alvey programme; and what proportion of such applications were turned down.

Mr. Butcher: Since applications started being r in September 1983 the Alvey directorate has recei formal applications for support, 126 of which ha turned down to date.

Companies Act 1980 (Prosecutions)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State fo and Industry how many successful prosecutions the been under section 75 of the Companies Act 198 is satisfied with the workings of the Companies A in practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: There have been no prosecution section 75 of the Companies Act 1980. The work United Kingdom company law are kept under revi we are always willing to consider constructive sugg for improvement.

Manufacturing Trade Figures

Mr. John Evans asked the Secretary of State fo and Industry, pursuant to the answer to the hon. M for St. Helens, North on 21 February, *Official R* column *564*, what were the levels of manufa exports for each year from 1973 to the present tim if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom Exports of Manufactures

	Value £ billion*	*Volume (1980=100*
1973	9·9	83·(
1974	13·4	88·4
1975	15·8	85·9
1976	20·6	93·3
1977	25·6	100·3
1978	27·7	99·8
1979	31·0	99·0
1980	34·9	100·0
1981	34·9	94·1
1982	37·3	95·2
1983	40·2	93·9
1984	46·5	101·8

* Balance of payments basis.
† Overseas trade statistics basis.

Inmos

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for and Industry what discussions he has had with the U

States Government over their claim that Inmos needs United States approval in the form of a licence to re-ship its own technology from the United Kingdom to other destinations.

Mr. Fletcher: Our objections to the extraterritorial application of US export controls are well known to the US Administration. But I am not aware that Inmos are experiencing particular difficulties from this cause.

British Tourist Authority

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value in real terms of the total funds available to the British Tourist Authority as compared to the funds available to it in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The following table shows the sums provided for the financial years 1980-81 to 1983-84 inclusive deflated to constant 1980 prices using the implied UK market price GDP deflator. Figures for 1984-85 on a comparable basis are not yet available.

Year	*Amount £'000*
1980-81	14,230
1981-82	14,690
1982-83	15,375
1983-84	13,670

These figures do not fully reflect the changes in the real level of purchasing power of the BTA overseas since they do not take account of rates of inflation in different countries or fluctuations in exchange rates between sterling and relevant foreign currencies, or changes in the level of the BTA's income derived from trade sources.

Grant-in-aid provision for 1985-86 for the British Tourist Authority will be contained in the Supply Estimates to be published later this month.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he has reduced the funds available to the British Tourist Authority in real terms; and what services he expects they will have to delete from their operations to take account of this situation.

Mr. Butcher: The BTA's grant-in-aid was cut in 1983-84 to take account of the planned reduction in the BTA's activities as announced by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 16 March 1983 at column *39* in reply to a written parliamentary question. Since then the level of BTA's grant-in-aid has in cash terms broadly been maintained. Within the overriding need to control the level of public expenditure, the Government have maintained their commitment to the tourist industry and welcome the continued growth in this important sector of the economy.

Quality Assurance Campaign

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent he has promoted overseas the quality assurance campaign; and what has been its extent.

Mr. Butcher: In its initial stages the national quality campaign has concentrated on increasing United Kingdom industry's awareness and use of sound quality management methods. This work has recently been extended to include activity aimed at inducing greater employee involvement in the pursuit of quality competitiveness. The programme as a whole is currently intended exclusively for United Kingdom consumption and no specific overseas promotional efforts are envisaged in the immediate future. However, the Department of Trade and Industry's register of quality assessed United Kingdom companies already offers home and overseas markets the growing evidence of United Kingdom quality capability.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated annual cost per person in the working population living in the designated areas of providing regional assistance at current levels;

(2) if he has made any representations to the European Community asking for some flexibility with the 35 per cent. figure which is the announced European limit to the proportion of the population that can live in designated areas;

(3) if he knows the proportion of the population of each member country of the European Community which lives in designated areas; and if any of them exceeds the 35 per cent. maximum figure permitted;

(4) what is the exact percentage of the working population living in areas that are designated as assisted areas.

Mr. Trippier: I will reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

COCOM Agreement

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if there has been any further delay in bringing into operation the Export of Goods (Control) Order enacting the COCOM agreement of 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has nothing to add to the answer he gave the hon. Gentleman on 8 February at columm *743*.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to answer the letter on the COCOM agreement sent to him by the hon. Member for Yeovil, dated 22 January.

Mr. Fletcher: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade expects to reply to the Member very shortly.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he takes, in formulating his policy on the renewal of the general agreement on tariffs and trade multi-fibre arrangement, due to expire in 1986, of the level of employment in the United Kingdom in the textile and clothing industries and of its regional distribution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: In formulating our policy in what regime should succeed the current multi-fibre arrangement, the Government will take full account of the level of and trends in employment in the textile and clothing industries, bearing in mind the likely causes of such trends. The possible effects on the regional distribution of employment of a particular import policy regime will also be taken into account.

EC Research Subsidy (Leather)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will take up with the European Commission the subsidy provided to research in leather in Italy by a levy on imports.

Mr. Fletcher: My understanding is that a levy is imposed both on domestic production and on imports. If the hon. Member has any particular problem in mind and sends me details, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade would be happy to consider the matter further.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been *(a)* the level of exports and *(b)* the balance of trade in pharmaceutical products in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Fletcher: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	United Kingdom exports (fob)	*Crude balance*
1980	745	+522
1981	852	+554
1982	978	+603
1983	1,073	+603
1984*	1,222	+680

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Division 54 (medicinal and pharmaceutical products.

Notes: Crude balance is calculated as United Kingdom exports (fob) less United Kingdom imports (cif).

* Provisional figures.

False and Misleading Price Information (Review)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations have been conducted on the inter-departmental working party's review of legislation on false and misleading price information; what action he now intends to take; and if he will consider extending the review to cover consumer price indications for real property, including new houses.

Mr. Fletcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 January 1985, c. *541-2*]: As indicated in my announcement on 3 May 1984 at columns 205-6, consultation took place on the recommendations in the working party's report and on his comments on some of those recommendations. The responses from a wide cross-section of trade and consumer interests showed general agreement on the need for improved legislation in this area with a view both to removing the complexities of the existing law and to controlling more effectively certain practices which are widely held to be potentially misleading.

A strong majority of those responses were in favour of the central recommendation of the Report that the existing legislation should be replaced by a general prohibition on false and misleading price information with the necessary supporting detail being provided by a statutory code of practice. A clear majority view also emerged in favour of each of the other provisional proposals on which my statement of 3 May 1984 had invited views.

The Government will introduce legislation which closely follows the majority view emerging from these consultations as soon as parliamentary time is available.

The basic provision of the Bill will be a prohibition on false and misleading price inf Provided that a sufficiently clear and precise practice can be established (and discussions on representatives of interested parties will now b my Department) most of the necessary support will be in this form rather than in the legislation i Bill will therefore include powers for the Secretar to draw up a statutory code of practice (adm evidence, but not in itself mandatory) with the the Director General of Fair Trading and in co with representatives of interested parties; and power to make regulations by order.

The Bill will also provide that any such Cod laid before Parliament and be subject to resolution before coming into operation. On points on which the consultation invited comm Bill will provide for enforcement of the legis continue to be by trading standards offic (prosecution in Scotland remaining in the han procurators fiscal); for a single defence of having reasonable precautions and exercised all due though without prejudice to the availability general defences under the criminal law; for the trial on indictment (in England and Wales) to and for the coverage to be wider than the legislation.

One important aspect of this proposed wider is that the new framework will extend to the d bureaux de change of commission charges and buying and selling rates, an area where some have evoked criticism from many overseas visit

The proposed extension to land transactions w only to price indications for new residential offered by builders to private individuals.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy (Research and Develop

Mr. Tony Speller asked the Secretary of Energy what consequences he expects to flow proposed 40 per cent. cut in funding on the r energy research design and development progra

Mr. David Hunt: There is no such propo Department has no plans at present for any specifi in funding for the renewable energy resea development programme, but I will consider car recommendations made by ACORD after its for review of renewables.

Torus Consortium

Mrs. Short asked the Secretary of State fo which European Governments are represented in European Torus consortium.

Mr. Goodlad: The European Governments r ted in the joint European Torus undertaking are

Belgium	Italy
Denmark	Luxembourg
France	The Netherlands
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Ireland	United Kingdom

Coal (Pithead Price)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest average pithead price of coal produced in the United Kingdom; how this compares with the price of coal imported into the British market from the United Kingdom's principal competitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Current average pithead list prices are as follows:

	£ per tonne
Bituminous house coal	59
Industrial coals	35-71
Power station coal	43

No price comparisons are available for imported power station coal, since there have been no imports during the strike. It appears that prices for imported domestic and industrial coals in recent months have in some cases been well above those of United Kingdom supplies, partly due to the strength of the US dollar. The present exchange rate, if it were to persist, would give United Kingdom coal a new competitive edge, provided always that the industry could satisfy its customers as to security of supply.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the division in responsibility between his Department and British Nuclear Fuels plc with regard to the storage, export and accounting of plutonium.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 February 1985 at column *353* and the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office at column *359*. The Department is consulted by the Department of Trade and Industry on the issue of licences for BNFL's exports of nuclear materials.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Energy pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *725*, if he will list the names of the leaders of the insulation industry, and the companies to which they belong, who have expressed their considerable gratitude and enthusiasm for all that his Department is doing in the field of energy efficiency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I and my Department are in regular contact with the Buildings Energy Efficiency Confederation and many other trade associations and individual companies within the insulation industry, which have expressed their enthusiasm for my energy efficiency initiatives. It would not be appropriate to name individuals or companies.

EMPLOYMENT

Catering Industry

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Employment what number and percentage of staff in the catering industry who were found by the Wages Inspectorate to have been underpaid have subsequently received their entitlement; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1983, the pay of 81,615 workers covered by the three wages councils for the hotel and catering trade was checked; 8,630 or 10·6 per cent. were found to have been underpaid, and 6,905 or 80 per cent. received arrears of pay amounting to £831,018.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the additional employees who gained employment over the last 12 months were male full-time, male part-time, female full-time and female part-time, respectively; how many of these jobs were taken by people who had previously claimed benefit; and by how many the population of working age increased in the past 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is estimated that between September 1983 and September 1984 the numbers of full-time female and part-time female employees in employment in Great Britain increased by 15,000 and 174,000 respectively, while the number of male employees in employment decreased by 86,000. Separate estimates are not available for full-time and part-time male employees. Over the same period the numbers of full-time females, part-time females, and males in the employed labour force (which additionally includes the self employed and Her Majesty's forces) are estimated to have increased by 54,000, 207,000 and 81,000 respectively.

The Department's statistics do not show the destinations of people who cease claiming unemployment benefit. Between June 1983 and June 1984 it is estimated that the population of working age in Great Britain rose by about 200,000.

Construction Industry (Death and Injuries)

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of deaths, *(b)* the number of serious injuries and *(c)* the number of those employed in the construction industry for the years 1979 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information for incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive for 1979-83 is as follows. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Construction industry: Great Britain—1979-83

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	**1983*
Deaths to employees	128	134	106	100	118
Deaths to non-employees†	21	31	23	31	31
Total deaths	149	165	129	131	149
Major injuries to employees	n/a	n/a	1,690	1,950	2,151
Major injuries to non-employees	n/a	n/a	76	84	121
Total major injuries‡	n/a	n/a	1,766	2,034	2,272
Employees (thousands)	1,251·2	1,219·6	1,094·8	1,005·2	1,039·5

* Provisional.

† Before 1981, deaths to non-employees were reported on a voluntary basis only and are therefore not directly comparable with figures for 1981 to 1983 which are based on reports resulting from a specific requirement under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980.

‡ Numbers of major injuries as defined in NADOR were not collected before 1981.

n/a=Not available.

Average Wage

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average wages paid to *(a)* manual workers and *(b)* non-manual workers in (i) Scotland and (ii) England and Wales in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on the average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees working a full week, distinguishing males and females, and manual and non-manual employees, in Scotland and in England and Wales are published in tables 108, 109, 111 and 112 of part E of the annual reports on the new earnings survey between 1979 and 1984, copies of which are in the Library.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average rate of unemployment in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each of the last six years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of unemployment rate for unemployed claimants in Scotland and the United Kingdom are available in the House of Commons Library. Comparisons are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which enable some men, mainly aged 60 an receive the long-term rate of supplementary national insurance credits without having to si unemployment benefit office.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of Employment if he will list the numbers in the age categories: *(a)* 16 to 18-year-olds, *(b)* 18 olds, *(c)* 25 to 50-year-olds and *(d)* those over age who were (i) registered as unemployed an Government training scheme in (1) Scotland United Kingdom at the latest available date equivalent date in each of the last six years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon as soon as possible.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of Employment if he will list the number of unem each of the member countries of the Organi Economic Co-operation and Development at available date and on the equivalent dates in e last six years; and if he will also express these percentage rates of unemployment for the concerned.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following is the information. The unemployment figures are comparable owing to national differences in co definitions.

Unemployment in OECD

	Latest date			1 year earlier		2 years earlier		3 years earlier		4 years earlier		5 years earlier		6
		Level thousands	Rate per cent.	Level thousands	Rate per cent.	Level thousands	Rate per cent.	Level thousands	Rate per cent.	Level thousands	Rate per cent.	Level thousands	Rate per cent.	thous
Canada	Jan'85	1,483	12·2	1,473	12·4	1,611	13·7	1,103	9·5	944	8·2	945	8·5	
United States	Jan'85	9,131	8·0	9,755	8·8	12,517	11·4	10,183	9·4	8,746	8·2	7,234	6·9	6
Japan	Dec'84	1,420	2·7	1,430	2·5	1,350	2·3	1,190	2·1	1,180	2·1	1,070	1·9	1
Australia	Jan'85	655	9·3	719	10·3	695	10·1	440	6·5	430	6·5	438	6·7	
New Zealand	Dec'84	63	n/a	81	n/a	70	n/a	50	n/a	50	n/a	27	n/a	
Austria	Jan'85	198	6·9	191	6·7	182	6·3	156	5·4	105	3·7	91	3·2	
Belgium	Jan'85	530	19·3	523	19·1	497	18·1	439	—	378	—	314	—	
Denmark	Oct'85	257	9·8	277	10·5	255	9·7	242	9·2	200	7·6	141	5·4	
Finland	Nov'84	159	6·3	152	6·1	139	5·7	126	5·2	107	4·5	106	4·6	
France	Jan'85	2,553	13·3	2,252	11·7	2,130	11·1	2,034	10·6	1,680	8·9	1,485	7·9	1,
Germany	Jan'85	2,619	10·6	2,539	10·2	2,487	10·2	1,950	8·2	1,309	5·6	1,037	4·5	1,
Greece	Jan'85	113	6·6	95	5·7	91	5·5	71	4·5	71	4·4	61	4·0	
Ireland	Jan'85	234	18·1	216	16·6	187	14·4	147	11·4	125	10·1	92	n/a	
Italy	Oct'84	2,375	10·2	2,358	10·2	2,094	9·3	n/a	9·1	n/a	7·6	n/a	7·6	
Luxembourg	Jan'85	3	1·9	3	1·9	3	n/a	2	n/a	2	n/a	1	n/a	
Netherlands	Dec'84	796	17·0	856	18·3	765	15·0	578	11·2	405	7·7	289	5·3	
Norway	Dec'84	65	3·2	72	3·5	63	3·2	36	1·8	30	1·5	25	1·4	
Portugal	Sep'84	303	n/a	253	n/a	227	n/a	237	n/a	270	n/a	297	n/a	
Spain	Dec'84	2,604	21·7	2,342	18·7	2,151	17·8	1,744	15·8	1,415	12·8	1,130	9·7	
Sweden	Dec'84	123	2·8	147	3·4	140	3·2	125	2·9	86	2·0	74	1·7	
Switzerland	Dec'84	34	1·0	30	1·0	24	0·8	9	n/a	6	n/a	9	n/a	
Turkey	Jul'84	781	n/a	538	n/a	428	n/a	248	n/a	281	n/a	164	n/a	
United Kingdom	Jan'85	3,341	13·9	3,200	13·3	3,225	13·4	2,896	12·0	2,271	9·4	1,374	5·6	1,
Yugoslavia	Sep'84	995	n/a	914	n/a	871	n/a	817	n/a	792	n/a	767	n/a	
Iceland	—	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	

n/a=Not available.
Source: OECD "Main Economic Indicators" and "Historical Statistics" supplemented by Labour Attache reports.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average rate of unemployment in each of the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in each of the last six years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following is the information. The unemployment figures on definitions are not fully comparable owing to di in coverage. The OECD standardised rates take ac these differences as far as possible.

Unemployment rates in OECD member countries 1979-1984

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
*Canada	7·4	7·4	7·5	10·9	11·8	11·2
*United States	5·8	7·0	7·5	9·5	9·5	7·4
*Japan	2·1	2·0	2·2	2·4	2·6	2·7

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
*Australia	6·2	6·0	5·7	7·1	9·9	8·9
New Zealand	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
*Austria	2·1	1·9	2·5	3·5	4·1	n/a
*Belgium	8·2	8·8	10·8	12·6	13·9	14·0
†Denmark	6·1	7·0	9·2	9·8	10·7	n/a
*Finland	5·9	4·6	5·1	5·8	6·1	6·0
*France	5·9	6·3	7·3	8·0	8·0	8·9
*Germany	3·2	3·0	4·4	6·1	8·0	8·1
‡Greece	n/a	1·1	1·2	1·4	1·6	1·9
Iceland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
‡Ireland	n/a	8·2	10·2	12·2	14·9	16·5
*Italy	7·5	7·5	8·3	9·0	9·8	n/a
‡Luxembourg	n/a	0·7	1·0	1·3	1·5	1·7
*Netherlands	5·4	6·0	8·6	11·4	13·7	14·0
*Norway	2·0	1·7	2·0	2·6	3·3	3·0
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
*Spain	8·5	11·2	14·0	15·9	17·4	n/a
*Sweden	2·1	2·0	2·5	3·1	3·5	3·1
Switzerland	n/a	n/a	n/a	0·4	0·9	n/a
Turkey	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
*United Kingdom	5·6	6·9	10·5	12·3	13·1	13·2
Yugoslavia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Notes
n/a Not available
* OECD standardised unemployment rates
† National definitions of unemployment
‡ Eurostat estimate

Pesticides

Mr Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to ensure the withdrawal of organochlorine pesticides for the use of timber treatment in roof spaces and other building timbers and to encourage the use of alternatives.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to withdraw the use of all organochlorine pesticides for treatment of timber in roof spaces or other building timbers but the use of such substances which are persistent has been severely restricted. Those in use the United Kingdom have received clearance under the pesticides safety precautions scheme which sets out precautions necessary to ensure safe use. The Government's policy has always been to encourage the industry to use less hazardous alternatives as they become available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to improve the monitoring of pesticide incidents affecting the public.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Every incident involving pesticides brought to the attention of HM Agricultural Inspectorate by a member of the public is given most careful consideration and investigated in depth whenever possible. All reported accidents are investigated. Enforcement action may follow the investigation of an incident or accident.

Whenever appropriate, investigations are carried out in conjunction with the employment medical advisory service.

Details of incidents are reported to the agricultural poisons appraisal panel, amongst whose functions is the medical evaluation of the incident.

The Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission's agriculture industry advisory committee are well aware of public concern about the use of pesticides and the use of all chemicals on farms is currently the subject of special consideration by a working group 'Chemicals in Agriculture'.

The Agricultural Inspectorate will be featuring the safe use of pesticides as part of a campaign 'Your Health' which began last week and which will be seen by the public at major agricultural shows during the year.

Trends in pesticide use are kept under constant review.

Wages Councils

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest available date, the wages set by each of the wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Wages councils determine minimum pay rates and other conditions of service for many different categories of workers and for a variety of circumstances. For this reason, it is not practicable to publish the statutory minimum rates which are set out in full in the orders made by the councils. Copies of the wages orders are available in the Library.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in circumstances where Manpower Services Commission staff report to area manpower boards that a youth training scheme trainee has suffered an accident, there are standing instructions as to the form in which such information may be given, and, in particular, whether the information may be given orally or in writing.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *18-19*]: Local staff of the Manpower Services Commission are instructed to give only information to area manpower boards about individual accidents on the youth training scheme. Identifying details which might prejudice any subsequent legal proceedings are not normally disclosed.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Manpower Services Commission's memorandum 511/3, supplement 4, which gives information on accidents to area manpower boards.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *129*]: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on 28 February 1985 at column *226*.

THE ARTS

National Theatre

28. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of the National theatre.

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend believes that the very substantial grant made available by the Arts Council to the National theatre, supplemented by box-office receipts and sponsorship, will enable it to continue its important and successful contribution to theatre.

South Bank Board

29. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on the setting up and membership of the South Bank Board.

Mr. Waldegrave: The establishment of a board of management is dependent on the progress of the Local Government Bill. The Arts Council is not presently empowered by its Royal Charter to establish such a board. Appropriate amendments to the charter will first have to be approved.

Heritage Provision

30. **Sir David Price** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts why the provision for the heritage in "The Government's Expenditure Plans" (Cmnd. 9428-II) has been set at £2 million for 1985-86; and why there is no capital provision.

Mr. Waldegrave: The heritage provision for 1985-86 is £3 million to the National heritage memorial fund and £2 million for acceptances in lieu of tax. The annual allocation of funds must depend on what can be afforded, but as the House will know, an extra £25 million is to be made available this year to the National Heritage memorial fund to meet special needs.

Arts Sponsorship

31. **Mr. Freud** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts, if he will estimate the revenue that will accrue to the arts from sponsorship in the year 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: Business sponsorship of the arts has risen from £500,000 in 1976 to £15 million in 1984. I expect this increase to continue, but it is not possible to estimate future figures for any given year.

West Midlands Regional Arts Association

32. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what increment will be allocated to the West Midlands Regional Arts Association for the 1985-86 financial year; to what extent this takes into account the previous financial year's rate of inflation; and what consideration was given to the requirements of the five regionally-based symphony orchestras before his decision was taken.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Arts Council's grant to west midlands arts for 1985-86 will be in two parts a basic grant of £1·145 million which provides a 3·1 per cent. increase over the current year's allocation to take account of inflation, and an additional sum, to be announced at the end of March, as a share of the £3 million available for the council's development strategy. The needs of the regionally-based symphony orchestras have been considered separately from the grants to regional arts associations.

Grant Allocations

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations he has received from Northern, Greater London and West Midlands arts about their grant allocations for the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Korea

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the possibility of the reunification of South Korea and North Korea based on the concept of confederation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Our view is that the reunification of the Korean peninsula is primarily a matter for the Koreans to pursue through direct contacts between the two sides. The meetings last November marked a welcome step in contacts between north and south. It is regrettable that this process has received a setback as a result of the recent North Korean insistence on postponement.

Diplomatic Posts

Mrs. Renée Short: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he sought with representatives of British export companies prior to his recent announcement of the closure of some overseas diplomatic posts; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for this decision.

Mr. Renton: We had the interests of British exporters very much in mind when considering the lists of posts to be closed. The views of the DTI were sought before final decisions were taken. Both they and our officials are in close touch with industry and its representative bodies on the importance of our commercial services in different parts of the world.

The reasons for the closures were given in my right hon. and learned Friend's statement to the House on 22 November 1984 at columns 623-31.

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Forth: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce the composition of the British delegation to the United Nations end of Decade for Women conference; how large a delegation he intends to appoint; and what estimate he has made for expenditure planning purposes of the likely cost of sending the delegation.

Mr. Renton: We hope to announce the composition of the delegation shortly. The size of the delegation is likely to be similar to that of our delegations to the two previous conferences of the United Nations Decade for Women, though there may be some reduction in the number of supporting officials.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has allocated just over £15,000 for the cost of sending those members of the delegation for which it is responsible.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Mr. Deakins: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy to criticise all countries that disregard their obligations not to threaten or to use force on those who violate the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries.

Mr. Luce: The North Atlantic allies condemn the threat or use of force in violation of obligations under the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki final act. In their communiqué of 14 December 1984, NATO Foreign Ministers declared that it was unacceptable that the Soviet Union

"continues to violate the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan"

in disregard of these obligations.

Mr. Deakins: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any North Atlantic Treaty Organisation communiqué has criticised United States policy in Nicaragua or elsewhere in the Third world.

Mr. Luce: No.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what have been the figures for crime committed in the Falkland Islands in respect of offences of violence, drug taking and illegal immigration in the most recently available annual period; and if he will make a statement on the trend in these figures.

Mr. Renton: In the last 12 months there have been 14 convictions on charges of violence and four on drugs offences. We are not aware of any prosecutions under the immigration ordinance. Levels of crime remain low, viewed in relation to the presence in the Islands of over 2,000 unaccompanied construction personnel.

El Salvador

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to provide military training for Salvadorean officers in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on 15 February at column *302*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's intention to send official observers to the forthcoming constituent assembly elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Renton: We are carefully considering the possibility of appointing official observers.

British Embassy School, Bonn

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the future of the British embassy school in Bonn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The British embassy school in Bonn is not the direct responsibility of Her Majesty's Government. The general management of the school is vested in a school committee, of which the chairman is appointed by HM ambassador. I am told that the committee is at present changing its constitution to that of a registered association (Eingetragene Verein) under Federal German law.

TRANSPORT

Drink-drive Campaign (Cost)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost to his Department of carrying out the stay low drink-drive campaign for Christmas 1984.

Mrs. Chalker: The cost of this campaign, including research, production and media cost, was £1·22 million.

A40

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is planning the closure of the carriageway crossings of the A40 between Wheatley and Oxford.

Mrs. Chalker: We are planning the closure of the gap at the junction of the A40 with the B4027 road to Islip, in order to improve safety and traffic flow. Draft orders, which will be open to objection in the usual way, will be published later this year. The situation at the Forest hill turn is under consideration. When traffic signals are operating for the Park and Ride entry at Risinghurst, it is proposed to ban right turns for eastbound traffic on the A40 at the gap opposite Neilson's offices. These manoeuvres will then take place at the traffic signals a short distance to the east.

Civil Aviation Policy

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received from British Airways, following the publication of his recent White Paper on "Civil Aviation Policy", concerning their proposals to help independent airlines by means of route development subsidies at regional airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department is discussing with the Civil Aviation Authority and British Airways how services which merit support might be selected. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Severn Crossing

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish phase I of the feasibility study for a second crossing of the Severn.

Mrs. Chalker: I wrote to the hon. Member about this on 11 February. As I told him, we are presently considering this detailed and complex report very carefully and will publish it just as soon as we can.

Lost Vessels (Inquiries)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all United Kingdom registered vessels lost at sea in unexplained circumstances in the last five years; what inquiries were set up into their disappearance; and what was the result of the inquiry in each case.

Mr. David Mitchell: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the circumstances in which the fishing vessel 'Mhairi L' was lost; whether any other vessel was involved; what are the terms of reference to his Department's inquiry into the loss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has appointed a principal marine surveyor under section 728 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 to investigate the circumstances attending the loss of the Fishing Vessel Mhairi L. There is no evidence at the moment to suggest any other vessel was involved. I wish to express my deepest sympathy to the families and relatives of those who lost their lives in the tragic loss of this vessel.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the largest section of motorway currently in use without a service area; and when he expects a service area to be provided to serve this section.

Mrs. Chalker: There is at present no service area on the 90 miles of motorway between the northern end of M11 and the M20 at Maidstone, via M25. We intend to have one service area at Birchanger on M11, to be operational by about early 1987, and another at Thurrock on M25, to be open a little later. Proposals are also being developed for service areas on the M20.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects motorway service areas to be in operation on the M11, M18, M20, M23, M25, M40, M50. M54 and M180 motorways, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My present programme is for the development of up to 14 new motorway service areas in England. A new service area at Ferrybridge at the junction of M62 and A1 will open in early April. Four service areas are planned for M25. I hope to see the one at South Mimms opened by the time the motorway is completed, with the other three following as quickly as possible. I intend also to complete the provision of services on the major feeder motorways to M25. I hope to see Birchanger on M11 opened by about early 1987. Proposals are also being developed for a site on the M4 near Reading; for up to three sites on M20; and for three sites on M40. It is not yet possible to predict when these sites will open.

In addition, I intend to up-grade the Brent Knoll rest area on M5 to a full motorway service area by about late 1986.

Apart from Ferrybridge, the development and opening of all these service areas depends on the completion of all necessary planning and compulsory acquisition procedures, as well as engineering and construction works. I have no proposals at present for motorway service areas on M18, M23, M50, M54 and M180.

Gatwick (Signposting)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make steps to secure the signposting of Gatwick airport on main roads leading to it from Kent and the central London area.

Mrs. Chalker [*pursuant to her reply*, of 1 March 1985, c. *310*]: Gatwick airport was added to the list of approved destinations on primary routes in 1982. It is also one of the key destinations for signs on the M25. Additional signs to the airport will be provided at the M20-M26 junction this summer and on the A21 (Sevenoaks bypass) to the south of the A25, as part of the signing associated with the M25 Swanley-Sevenoaks link currently under construction.

Signing on non-trunk roads both in Kent and Greater London is a matter for the local highway authorities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Soil Survey

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the functions of the Soil Survey of England and Wales include the survey of minerals below the subsoil.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the Agricultural and Food Research Council that the soil survey makes observations to 1·25 metres depth. Occasionally the survey samples the soil and describes it to a greater depth in order to determine the nature of its parent material. In some districts, studies of this kind have contributed substantially to our knowledge of sand and gravel resources.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a map showing the most up-to-date state of the national soil survey, together with the relevant statistical data.

Mr. Brooke: The Agricultural and Food Research Council is arranging for such a map to be placed in the Library. The statistical data are voluminous and it would be helpful if my hon. Friend could indicate his requirements in that area more precisely.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Soil Survey of England and Wales was set up; and what are its precise objectives.

Mr. Brooke: The soil survey of England and Wales was established in 1939, though it did not operate during World War 2 and eventually began operations in 1946. Its headquarters is at the Rothamstead experimental station, Hertfordshire, which is a state-aided agricultural research institute supported by the AFRC.

The overall aim of the survey is to evaluate the soil resources of England and Wales and to contribute to their efficient and careful use. More specifically the objectives are to:

—Assemble information about soil types, their distribution and variability throughout the landscape;
— Organise the information in terms of a national classification system;
—Produce maps to show the spatial distribution of soil types;
—Liaise with users in the interpretation of information for specific purposes;
—Develop a soil information system.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual cost of the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that, on the basis of full economic cost which is the Agricultural and Food Research Council's normal method of assessing the cost of commissioned research work, the current annual cost of the survey is £1·7 million.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what areas have so far been reconnaissance-surveyed by the Soil Survey of England and Wales; and at what cost;

(2) what areas have so far been surveyed in detail by the Soil Survey of England and Wales; and at what cost.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the whole of England and Wales has been surveyed at a reconnaissance level (1 : 250,000); this part of the work began in 1978 and took five years at a total cost of about £6·5 million. About 20 per cent. of the country has been surveyed in detail (1 : 25,000 to 1 : 63,360) at a cost of about £5·5 million over the last 12 years.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many people are currently employed on the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: Sixty-nine.

Teachers (Pupil Contact Hours)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average number of pupil contact hours per week by teachers in 1969, 1974, 1979 and 1984 in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The average number of pupil contact hours per week by teachers in maintained primary schools in England in 1979 and 1984 are estimated to have 693 and 665 respectively. The correspondingly information for teachers in maintained secondary schools was 491 and 473. Comparable information for 1969 and 1974 is not available.

Bursaries

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of BSc undergraduate and MSc postgraduate university courses have had a reduction in bursaries provided by the Medical Research Council in the last two years.

Mr. Brooke: The main source of support for undergraduate students in the science, as in other disciplines, is mandatory awards administered by local education authorities. However, the Medical Research Council (MRC) makes available a limited number of intercalated awards to medical and dental schools, to enable certain students to take an honours science degree. The allocation of intercalated awards to individual courses and students is a matter for the school concerned. In each of the academic years 1983-84 and 1984-84 the MRC provided 380 such awards.

In 1983-84 the council awarded 105 advanced course postgraduate studentships among 52 MSc courses. In 1984-85 the same number of studentships was distributed among 53 courses.

European Organisation for Nuclear Research

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the French Government about United Kingdom membership of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Geneva and the salaries of British research staff there.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the cost-of-living bonuses which have been given to British researchers participating in the European Organisation for Nuclear Research.

Mr. Brooke: British members of the staff of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) receive the same annual adjustments to their salaries as all CERN staff members of whatever nationality. The adjustments are decided by the Council of CERN, taking into account an annual index which is determined by increases in the cost of living in Geneva and any real net increases in local and central government salaries in Switzerland. In the last four years, these adjustments have been as follows:

Year	*Index*	*Increase actually awarded*
	per cent.	*per cent.*
1982	5·42	4·97
1983	4·81	3·50
1984	3·79	3·00
1985	4·39	4·39

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he will make available to the Science and Engineering Research Council to enable it to participate in the European synchrotron radiation source.

Mr. Brooke: Synchrotron radiation complements neutron beams as ways of facilitating research in condensed matter. Both techniques require large and expensive facilities. The proposed European synchrotron radiation facility (ESRF) is one of a number of existing or proposed international, or potentially international, facilities which might contribute to such research. An agreement between European countries on the shared use and funding of all such facilities is desirable; discussions to that end have been held, and continue.

Meanwhile it is not necessarily the case that participation in the ESRF would of itself require

significant additional resources; for instance, United Kingdom participation in the ESRF might be achieved at little or no additional cost the United Kingdom if other European countries agreed to participate in the SERC's spallation neutron source. if the ESRF did require additional resources, it would be for the SERC, and beyond that for my right hon. Friend advised by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, to decide what priority to give it in relation to other calls on, respectively, SERC's grant-in-aid and the science budget as a whole.

Burnham Committee

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of members of the Burnham committee are representatives of his Department.

Sir Keith Joseph: In addition to the independent chairman, the Burnham Primary and Secondary Committee has 59 members (32 on the teachers' panel and 27 on the management panel) and the Burnham Further Education Committee has 34 members (17 each on the teachers' and management panels). I have two representatives on the management panel of each committee.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he takes in determining the appropriate weighting of the representation of the teachers' unions on the Burnham committee, to satisfy himself as to the accuracy of their membership figures; whether for this purpose he takes account of the extent to which the total membership figure of a union may include persons who are either students or retired; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have not myself been involved in a review of the membership of the Burnham Primary and Secondary Committee. During the review conducted by my predecessor in 1979-81, the teacher associations were asked to submit membership figures for 31 December 1979 on a common basis, showing the number of fully paid-up members employed by LEAs in England and Wales for the provision of primary or secondary education. This allowed account to be taken of students and retired teachers in membership. I explained my position on reviewing Burnham membership on 19 February, at column *847*.

Education Costs

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in descending order the cost per pupil per annum for each local education authority of *(a)* primary education, *(b)* secondary education, *(c)* sixth form education and *(d)* higher education.

Mr. Dunn: The net cost per primary and secondary school pupil in each local education authority is given in the following table. There is no separate information on the costs of sixth form education. Expenditure on higher education cannot meaningfully be attributed to individual local education authorities on a per student basis.

*Net Cost per Pupil (£ Cash)—England—1982-83

LEA	Net Cost Per Pupil
	£
Primary schools	
ILEA	1,144
Haringey	985
Ealing	932
Brent	929
Newham	895
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	850
Waltham Forest	849
Hounslow	843
Sheffield	814
Liverpool	795
Wolverhampton	791
Barnet	789
South Tyneside	785
Northumberland	680
Sunderland	679
Avon	678
Salford	678
Leicestershire	675
Hertfordshire	674
Enfield	672
Tameside	671
Wigan	671
Leeds	670
Kirklees	668
Sefton	666
Dorset	661
Merton	777
Barking	773
Manchester	765
Hillingdon	761
Walsall	758
Richmond-Upon-Thames	752
Humberside	747
Barnsley	746
North Tyneside	744
Gateshead	743
Bradford	740
Harrow	738
Sandwell	728
Bromley	725
Coventry	725
Knowsley	723
Doncaster	721
Bedfordshire	717
Calderdale	715
Nottinghamshire	715
Staffordshire	714
Croydon	711
Havering	708
Redbridge	706
Durham	705
Isle of Wight	704
North Yorkshire	704
Wakefield	701
Cumbria	696
Kingston-upon-Thames	692
Oxfordshire	692
Suffolk	690
Bexley	687
Rochdale	685
Cleveland	684
Rotherham	660
East Sussex	660
Bury	659
Oldham	657
Solihull	657
Berkshire	657
Cheshire	656
Derbyshire	655
Sutton	654
Norfolk	652
Buckinghamshire	649
Birmingham	649

LEA	Net Cost Per Pupil
Surrey	648
Shropshire	647
Warwickshire	646
Trafford	642
Gloucestershire	640
St. Helens	635
Hereford & Worcester	634
Stockport	629
Northamptonshire	628
Devon	627
Cambridgeshire	622
Dudley	621
Hampshire	621
Wiltshire	620
Essex	618
Cornwall	616
Wirral	615
Kent	614
Lancashire	614
West Sussex	609
Bolton	608
Lincolnshire	605
Somerset	601
Secondary schools	
ILEA	1,633
Haringey	1,323
Brent	1,261
Waltham Forest	1,256
Newham	1,215
Harrow	1,192
Ealing	1,167
Manchester	1,151
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	1,138
Barnet	1,127
Hillingdon	1,095
Croydon	1,093
Havering	1,091
Liverpool	1,084
Hounslow	1,079
Redbridge	1,079
Knowsley	1,071
Barking	1,050
Rochdale	1,050
Bromley	1,047
Sheffield	1,045
Buckinghamshire	1,036
Walsall	1,033
Richmond-Upon-Thames	1,015
South Tyneside	1,008
Bury	1,002
Wolverhampton	1,000
North Tyneside	996
Bexley	992
Nottinghamshire	992
Enfield	985
Kingston-upon-Thames	985
Surrey	982
Avon	981
Salford	979
Oxforshire	978
Wigan	975
Hertfordshire	974
Coventry	973
Cumbria	971
Sutton	969
Sandwell	966
Norfolk	961
Cleveland	959
Doncaster	955
Leicestershire	955
Lincolnshire	955
Bedfordshire	953
Humberside	952
North Yorkshire	951
Wirral	950
Merton	949
Berkshire	949
Shropshire	946
St. Helens	937
Staffordshire	937
Birmingham	933
Lancashire	932
Essex	928
East Sussex	927
Gloucestershire	927
Sunderland	926
Cheshire	925
Cornwall	923
Trafford	921
Cambridgeshire	921
Hampshire	920
Sefton	918
Northamptonshire	917
Tameside	916
Barnsley	916
Calderdale	915
Durham	915
Bolton	914
Devon	910
Wiltshire	910
Dorset	909
Kent	908
Warwickshire	907
Derbyshire	906
Isle of Wight	904
Gateshead	903
Northumberland	890
Suffolk	888
Stockport	886
West Sussex	884
Oldham	879
Rotherham	875
Solihull	873
Kirklees	873
Somerset	872
Hereford & Worcester	864
Dudley	864
Leeds	854
Bradford	852
Wakefield	828

Note.

* The figures are taken from "Education Statistics 1982-83 Actuals" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give the number of schools wishing to participate in the assisted places scheme for which he has relaxed the requirement concerning the percentage of aided pupils entering the scheme who formerly attended maintained schools.

Mr. Dunn: Schools entering the scheme are expected to comply with the conditions relating to the proportion of assisted pupils from publicly-maintained schools. Any subsequent difficulties are considered as they arise.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been carried out by his Department into the effects on comprehensive school sixth-forms of the operation of the assisted places scheme at schools in their locality; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has monitored the numbers of pupils transferring to assisted sixth form places

from publicly-maintained schools. The numbers involved are negligible for individual maintained schools and cannot be considered a threat to their sixth forms.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the educational background of pupils currently receiving education under the assisted places scheme, specifying what evidence is available to his Department on the type of school attended prior to taking up the assisted place.

Mr. Dunn: At the time of their selection, 69 per cent. of assisted pupils were attending publicly-maintained schools, and had done so for at least two years.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the percentage of school income currently represented by money received under the assisted places scheme to schools participating in this scheme.

Mr. Dunn: At a typical participating school, I would estimate that payments in respect of remitted fees for assisted pupils represent about 11 per cent. of its fee income.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department concerning the occupation of parents of pupils currently educated under the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence is collected by his Department to enable it to assess the success of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Dunn: The success of the scheme lies in the manifest widening of opportunities available to bright children from low-income families.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average annual cost to his Department of an assisted places secondary school place; and how this compares with the average annual capitation for a maintained sector secondary school place.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sixth Form and Tertiary Colleges

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of pupils entering sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges from the private sector.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the proposed closures of grammar schools which have been refused by his Department since 1979, in each case stating the local education authority and year of decision.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many grammar schools have (i) closed and (ii) merged as a result of falling sc rolls in areas which have retained selection in each since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Closures of grammar schools in a retaining selection, where the proposals were made sc as a result of falling school rolls, have arisen only w my right hon. Friend or his predecessor appr proposals for amalgamations. Since 1979 the numbe grammar schools which have merged or will amalgar as a result of approved proposals and determination local education authorities is as follows:

Number of grammar schools involved in mergers

Year	*Number*
1979	Nil
1980	2
1981	2
1982	5
1983	Nil
1984	6

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Educa and Science (1) what study his Department has mad educational attainment in comprehensive school s forms in those areas which retain a selective secon system; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has made any study of the impac falling school rolls on educational provision in those a which have retained grammar schools.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend keeps such mat under regular review. However, it is for local educa authorities, in consultation with the governors voluntary aided and special agreement schools, to t a view of the form and pattern of secondary educa best suited to local circumstances and the preference parents.

School Meals

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State Education and Science what information he has as to number of schools privatising school meals in each of education authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that in Merton and Ealing school meals are supplied by private contractors; tha Hereford and Worcester all school meals are supplied private contractors or self-help groups and Lincolnshire and Dorset have put part of their school me provision in the hands of self-help groups. A number other LEAs are known to be considering privatisati Information as to the number of schools involved is collected centrally. Information for Wales is responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary State for Wales.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State Education and Science how many schools were closed the last week of February due to industrial action by National Union of Teachers or the National Association Schoolmasters and the Union of Women Teachers; how many schoolchildren were in the schools affected

Sir Keith Joseph: The 27,000 primary and secondary schools maintained by 104 local education authorities in England and Wales cater for about 8·3 million pupils and employ about 420,000 full-time teachers. Comprehensive information about the extent and effects of recent industrial action in these schools is not available centrally. The National Union of Teachers called on members in 212 schools with a total of some 147,000 pupils to strike on 26, 27 and 28 February. Reports to the Department from local education authorities indicate that by no means all of these schools had to close altogether.

It is estimated that about 600 schools in England were closed for part or in a few cases the whole of 26 February, the day on which the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers called a national half-day strike. In addition the education of many thousands of children has been disrupted in other schools as a result of action short of strikes called by the National Union of Teachers. The Government deplore the fact that children's education is being disrupted in this way.

Student Grant

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning the student maintenance grant for 1985-86; and when he expects to announce the figure.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has received some 11,000 representations since he announced the proposed changes in student grants for 1985-86 last November. The Government have announced that the main rates of grant will be increased by around 3 per cent. in 1985-86. Details of those rates will be issued as soon as practicable.

Pupils (Cost)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list average expenditure per pupil for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *179*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list average teachers' salaries for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *179*]: Up to date information is not available. The following average salaries for public sector school teachers and college and university lecturers have been derived from various UNESCO and European Community publications:

*£000s**

	1979	*1980*
Belgium	11·9	N/A
Canada	†11·9	N/A
Denmark	7·0	N/A
France	7·7	10·9
West Germany	12·5	14·3
Netherlands	18·5	N/A
Sweden	†11·8	N/A
United Kingdom	6·7	8·7
USA	†11·4	N/A

* At 1979 price levels adjusted for relative purchasing power of wages between countries.

† Based on teacher/lecturer head count, not full time equivalent of part-time as for other countries.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Transport Costs (Study)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost to public funds of the research study of transport costs in peripheral regions commissioned by the Department of Economic Development and others; how he assesses the value of the research and report to Northern Ireland; and what measures will follow to redress the disadvantage to the economy of the province of transport costs higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Boyson: The overall cost of the study was £50,000 with £12,500 each being contributed by the Department of Economic Development and the Industry Department for Scotland and £25,000 by the European Commission.

The research and the report are helpful in providing an analysis of the transport costs incurred by firms in Northern Ireland and comparing these with the equivalent costs for certain other regions of the United Kingdom. The study has been valuable in helping to resolve some of the uncertainties and misconceptions which surround this issue, and it is worth noting that the report has concluded that measurable transport costs are on average not significantly higher in Northern Ireland than in the other regions. The report has, however, drawn attention to other less readily quantifiable factors involved in Northern Ireland's peripheral location.

The report is being studied in detail and it is too early to indicate what lessons may be drawn from the study by Government.

Ice Rink (Castlereagh)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the proposed ice rink by Castlereagh borough council is being considered for either *(a)* a Government grant or *(b)* a Government loan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In view of the limited funds available for sport and recreation provision I do not see any prospect of being able to give any financial assistance.

No application has been received from Castlereagh borough council to borrow from the Government loan fund for this purpose.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the tender, accepted by Castlereagh borough council, for the proposed ice rink requires Government approval.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated final cost of the

proposed ice rink complex by Castlereagh borough council; and what is the projected effect on the rates in the borough.

Mr. Chris Patten: These are matters for Castlereagh borough council.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the proposed ice rink by Castlereagh borough council has received final planning permission.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the proposed ice rink by Castlereagh borough council has been given final approval by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 12 February 1985 the Department of the Environment sanctioned Castlereagh borough council to raise a loan to finance the cost of constructing an ice-rink complex. The Department is not involved in giving any other approvals.

Prisoners

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the numbers of male and female prisoners in Northern Ireland prisons at the end of each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Prison Population

Date	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
31 December			
1975	2,648	87	2,735
1976	2,520	65	2,585
1977	2,795	84	2,879
1978	2,733	80	2,813
1979	2,576	76	2,652
1980	2,365	56	2,421
1981	2,394	50	2,444
1982	2,294	54	2,348
1983	2,283	43	2,326
1984	2,003	35	2,038

The figures up to 1979 include borstal trainees; the figures from 1979 onwards include persons detained in young offenders' centres.

Terrorists (Trial Costs)

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total cost of the trials of persons charged on the evidence of converted terrorists at the latest date.

Mr. Scott: The information sought is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Wages Council Regulations (Breaches)

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employers in Northern Ireland were found by wage inspectors to be paying less than the statutory minimum remuneration or breaking other wages council regulations in each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
1. Paying less than statutory minimum remuneration	39	33	39	34
2. Breaches of other wages council regulations	321	365	253	445

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of Sta Northern Ireland how many employers who were fo have been in breach of the wages councils regulati each of the last five years were fined; and how many made to pay arrears.

Dr Boyson: No employers were fined. Numbers to pay arrears were as follows:

	number
1980	39
1981	33
1982	39
1983	34
1984	52

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of Sta Northern Ireland which industries in Northern Irela covered by the work of wages councils.

Dr. Boyson: There are 9 wages councils in No Ireland, as follows:

(1) Baking wages council
(2) Boot and shoe repairing wages council
(3) Catering wages council
(4) Clothing manufacturing wages council
(5) Laundry wages council
(6) Linen and cotton handkerchief and household and linen piece goods wages council
(7) Paper box wages council
(8) Road haulage wages council
(9) Sugar confectionery and food preserving council

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of Sta Northern Ireland what is the current statutory mini remuneration laid down by each of the wages counc Northern Ireland for a 40-hour week.

Dr. Boyson: The following table illustrates the cu adult statutory minimum remuneration. In some indu there is a range of statutory minimums in accordance gradings laid down by the relevant wages council. table shows the highest and lowest of these.

Wages council	*See foot-note*	*Highest minimum £*	*mi*
Baking	*(a)*	96·39	
Boot and shoe repairing	*(a)*	83·30	
Catering	*(a)*	62·53	
Clothing manufacturing	*(a)*	65·44	
Laundry	*(a)*	62·01	
Linen and cotton handkerchief etc.	*(a)*	73·48	
Paper box	*(b)*	82·09	
Road haulage	*(c)*	96·16	
Sugar confectionery and food preserving	*(a)*	72·88	

Notes:
(a) Based on a normal working week of 39 hours.
(b) Based on a normal working week of 37½ hours.
(c) Based on a normal working week of 40 hours.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees and employers come under the scope of each wages council in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The numbers at 31 December 1984 were:

Wages council	*Employers*	*Employees*
Baking	265	550
Boot and shoe repairing	34	61
Catering	3,256	14,330
Clothing manufacturing	136	8,013
Laundry	13	334
Linen and cotton handkerchief etc.	50	1,260
Paper box	12	720
Road haulage	1,325	5,831
Sugar confectionery and food preserving	35	203
Totals	5,126	31,302

Road Lighting

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of road lighting lanterns in use on urban roads are fluorescent; and what is their age.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is estimated that 12½ per cent. of the road lighting lanterns in use on urban roads in Northern Ireland are fluorescent. The average age of these fluorescent lanterns is approximately 15 years.

General Needs Housing Association

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tenanted houses of General Needs Housing Association houses have been sold with a discount to sitting tenants in Northern Ireland; and what proportion this is in percentage terms and numbers of the total stock of General Needs Housing Association houses.

Mr. Chris Patten: To date registered housing associations in Northern Ireland have sold at a discount, 128 dwellings providing general family accommodation to sitting tenants. This represents 6 per cent. of the total stock of such dwellings, which now totals 2,024.

WALES

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

13. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the cost of building the new Wrexham Maelor hospital.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The current estimates, inclusive of works, fees and equipment, are £14,596 million for the main hospital building and £2,309 million for the residential accommodation.

Redundancies

14. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many redundancies have been declared in Wales since 1979; and of these how many manufacturing jobs were lost.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Between May 1979 and December 1980, 89,014 redundancies were notified in Wales, 53,115 being in the manufacturing industry. Between January 1981 and December 1984 the figures, which were collected on a different basis, were 88,406 in Wales, of which 48,919 were in the manufacturing industry.

IDC Ltd.

15. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that the settlement of his claim against IDC Ltd., in respect of defective construction work at the Bangor nurses' home, Ysbyty Gwynedd, does not contain any stipulations about confidentiality of any of its terms similar to the settlement made in relation to the University of Wales hospital.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The claim against IDC has been made by the Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation which will not enter any agreement that would preclude reporting the terms of the settlement to Parliament.

South Glamorgan (Land Sale)

16. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the sale of education committee land in South Glamorgan.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: In addition to letters from my hon. Friend and my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) and the Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower), my right hon. Friend has received 36 letters about the most recent South Glamorgan proposals.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in *(a)* Gwent and *(b)* Wales compared with 1979 as a total and a percentage; and of the total unemployed how many are long-term unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 January 1985 there were 29,602 unemployed claimants in Gwent. A comparable claimant-based figure for 1979 is not available. The figure for registered unemployed in January 1979 was 15,968. For Wales as a whole for the same dates, the figures on a claimant-based claculation were 185,529 and 86,416 respectively, an increase of 114·7 per cent. The latest figures for the long-term unemployed relate to January 1985, when 75,697 had been unemployed in Wales for over one year.

Milk Quotas

19. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what conclusions he has reached concerning proposals to make the transfer of milk quotas more flexible.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, announced in his statement to the House on 28 February measures agreed at the recent Council of Agriculture Ministers to introduce greater flexibility into the quota arrangement. The provision which enables producers to switch between their wholesale and direct sale quotas according to the needs of their businesses will be particularly welcome.

Free School Meals

Mrs. Ann Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of pupils received free school meals in Wales for the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 in the following age groups *(a)* four to eight years, *(b)* nine to 12 years and *(c)* 13 to 16 years and by local education authority.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Information on the receipt of school meals by age of pupil is not available centrally. The total numbers of pupils receiving free meals at nursery, primary, secondary and special schools—on a specific day in the autumn of each year — are published annually in "Statistics of Education in Wales", copies of which are in the Library.

Teacher-Pupil Ratios

Mrs. Ann Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average teacher-pupil ratios for Wales in the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 198 in maintained primary schools and maintained schools by local education authorities.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The inform follows:

At January each year	*Pupil-teacher ratios with Primary schools*	*Sec*
1979	22·0	
1980	21·9	
1981	21·7	
1982	21·9	
1983	21·8	
1984	21·6	

New Schools

Mrs. Ann Clwyd asked the Secretary of Wales how many new schools were built in Wal 1973 to 1979 and 1979 to 1984; how many ar for building in the period 1985 to 1988; and if them in the order they were built, with their lo type, nursery, primary, secondary.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The informa available in the form requested.

From the financial year 1972-73 to 19 numbers of new primary and secondary maintai projects started in Wales were as follows, by authority:

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glam*	*Powys*	*South Glam*
1972-73							
Primary	10	7	6	2	7	2	4
Secondary	1	1	1	—	1	—	—
1973-74							
Primary	2	7	6	3	3	1	5
Secondary	—	—	1	—	1	—	1
1974-75							
Primary	8	3	6	5	9	4	5
Secondary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1975-76							
Primary	3	2	2	2	1	1	—
Secondary	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
1976-77							
Primary	2	—	2	—	1	—	3
Secondary	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
1977-78							
Primary	2	—	—	—	2	—	2
Secondary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1978-79							
Primary	—	1	1	2	1	2	2
Secondary	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

From 1979-80 to the current year the numbers of approvals given as required by the Education Act maintained primary and secondary schools building projects in Wales were as follows by autho

1979-80							
Primary	6	2	1	1	2	—	1
Secondary	—	—	—	1	2	1	—
1980-81							
Primary	3	2	—	1	—	—	—
Secondary	2	—	1	—	3	1	—
1981-82							
Primary	2	—	1	—	2	2	—
Secondary	—	—	1	—	1	1	—
1982-83							
Primary	1	1	—	2	4	2	—
Secondary	—	—	—	—	1	—	—

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam	Powys	South Glam	West Glam
1983-84								
Primary	—	2	3	—	4	—	—	—
Secondary	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
1984-85								
Primary	1	1	1	—	—	—	1	1
Secondary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Proposals for school building for future years are a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Boundary Review

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the instances since 1979 when he has overturned the Boundary Commissioners' local community review; which community authorities were involved; what was their political composition; and which of them protested against his decision.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The proposals of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales arising from the special community reviews of Welsh districts are made jointly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. We are empowered to accept its proposals, with or without modifications, or reject them. In no case have we rejected them. However, in the 32 decisions that have been announced since 1979 we have made 72 modifications to certain detailed proposals, in 26 districts. Some 140 community councils have been affected. The political composition of community councils is not known to our Departments.

Few community councils have protested against decisions to modify the commission's proposals. A greater number have objected to particular decisions where proposals have been accepted.

Building Land

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he will take to increase the supply of land available to house builders in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In September 1984 the Welsh Office issued circular 47/84 "Land for Housing in Wales" reminding local authorities of their responsibility to ensure that there is an adequate supply of land available for housing. County structure plans should show how future housing requirements can best be met and the Welsh Office will be looking to see that this is achieved in the current round of structure plan reviews. The circular also advised local authorities that where the supply of land is found to be inadequate to meet the structure plan provision for housing, authorities should consider what steps to take, including expediting planning applications and allocating additional land through the preparation and adoption of local plans. The Land Authority for Wales with its powers to acquire and dispose of land for development can also play a significant role in making more housing land available.

Planning Appeals

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average amount of time between an appeal to his Department against development control refusal by a local planning authority, or a national park authority, and the determination of that appeal.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The information requested is not available in terms of average times. The standard measure is that of the median. In 1984 the median times taken to decide appeals under sections 36 and 53 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 in Wales were as follows:

	Appeals decided by: Secretary of State	Inspector
	weeks	weeks
Inquiries	32*	30
Written representations	48†	21

Note: Median times are derived by ranking all cases in order of times taken and by taking the middle case as being representative of all.

* based on 11 appeals

† based on 10 appeals

General Needs Housing Association

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many tenanted houses of General Needs Housing Association houses in Wales have been sold to sitting tenants with a discount; and what proportion this is in percentage terms and numbers of the total stock of General Needs Housing Association houses.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The total number of dwellings sold by housing associations in Wales to sitting tenants under the Housing Act 1980 was 106 at September 1984; a further 743 sales of co-ownership dwellings had been completed by that date. Detailed information on discounts is not held centrally, but apart from those made by charitable associations all these sales are likely to have attracted discounts. These sales represent 5·3 per cent of Welsh housing association stock of some 16,000 dwellings. No information is available on the proportion of these dwellings which are classified as "General Need".

Public Bodies

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of the names of individuals that he has appointed to public bodies in Wales between May 1979 and 31 December 1983, together with individuals appointed to public bodies in Wales which he has *(a)* made jointly with other Ministers and *(b)* been consulted about.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

M4 (Design Life)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *89*, what is his estimate of the reduction in the design life of the carriageways of the M4 since the transfer of heavy freight from rail to road during the coal industry dispute.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The design life of some parts of these carriageway pavements was already exceeded before the additional traffic arose. It is estimated that the theoretical design life of more recently constructed sections could have been reduced by around 2 per cent. as a result of the transfer.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column 89, what is his assessment of the effects on the surface of the M4 east of Newport of the transfer of heavy freight from rail to road during the coal industry dispute; when these sections are to be resurfaced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: It is not possible to isolate the effects on the surface of the M4 of this transfer. Measures are to be taken to strengthen the older sections of the M4 carriageways between junction 22 (Newhouse) and junction 24 (Coldra) which have now exceeded their original design life. It is currently planned to commence these works in May.

Clothing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers employed in the Welsh textile and clothing industry for each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *238*]: The numbers employed in the textile, leather and clothing industry (Orders XIII-XV SIC(68)) were as follows:

	Number
December 1979	27,500
December 1980	23,000
September 1981	19,800

Since 1981 textile and clothing workers have been counted as part of other manufacturing industries. The latest quarterly estimates for this group, based on recent revisions to labour force surveys, was as follows:

	Number
December 1981	72,000
December 1982	67,000
December 1983	65,000
September 1984	67,000

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Harvest Intervals

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the extent of non-compliance with recommended harvest intervals in the farming community.

Mrs. Fenner: Pesticide residue levels in foodstuffs are monitored under a programme carried out by the Government's working party on pesticide residues. Levels found in food in the United Kingdom are generally well below internationally accepted maximum residue limits and studies over 20 years have shown a steady decrease in the exposure of the United Kingdom population to persistent pesticide residues in food.

Agriculture (Wages and Employ

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether h to date the figures shown in appendices Government economic service working pa wages and employment in agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requ in the following tables:

Table 1
Average and standard weekly hours of hired regular 1981-84

England and Wales

	Average basic hours	*Average overtime hours**	*Avera total ho*
1981	39·7	7·1	4
1982	39·7	6·9	4
1983	39·7	7·4	4
1984	39·7	6·8	4

* From 1981 onwards the Wages and Employmen separately identified contractual and non-contractual
Source: Wages and employment inquiry.

Table 2
Average weekly wages and earnings of hired regular 1980-84

	1980	*1981*	*1982*
England and Wales			
Statutory minimum wage at June	58·00	64·00	70·40
Prescribed wage†	70·82	79·81	87·39
Total earnings excluding payments in kind	84·91	94·76	104·01
Total earnings with payments in kind at AWB values	86·48	97·07	106·65
Total earnings with payments in kind at 'Market' values‡	89·73	102·06	112·77
Cost of employment with payments in kind at AWB values‖	98·62	108·67	118·56
Cost of employment with payments in kind valued at opportunity cost‖¶	101·64	115·29	126·69
United Kingdom			
Retail price index January 1974=100	263·7	295·0	320·4
United Kingdom all agricultural products price index 1980=100*	100·0	110·9	119·6

* This series relates to the Statutory Minimum for regular whole-time men.

† This is the annual average Statutory Minimum w "ordinary" hired regular whole-time men from corresponding Statutory Minimum overtime rate m difference between the annual average total weekly hour standard working week. It is thus different from that WEE reports.

‡ The value of milk received as payment in kind h at the maximum retail price in England and Wales. The received as payment in kind has been revalued at the house rent charged by District Councils in rural areas Wales. Other payments in kind are either at AWB valu in the Wages and Employment Enquiry.

‖ Apart from wages and payments in kind, costs of restricted to the employer's share of National Insurance

employer's liability insurance.

* The value of milk supplied as payment in kind has been revalued at the average price paid to milk producers by the England and Wales Milk Marketing board. The value of houses supplied as payment in kind has been revalued at the average Council house rent charged by District Councils in rural areas on England and Wales. Other payments in kind are either at AWB values or as recorded in the Wages and Employment enquiry.

• In 1983 there were two wage awards. On 1 September, the Statutory Minimum wage rose from £75·40 to £79·20 per week.

■ With effect from 3 June 1984.

⋆ This series has been rebased using 1980=100.

π Provisional.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recommendations he has issued to the Agricultural and Food Research Council in respect of employment of resources and manpower within the constraints of the budget which he plans to allocate to it during the next three years.

Mr. Jopling: My Ministry commissions research with the Agricultural and Food Research Council on a customer-contractor basis. We shall be finalising our commissions for 1985-86 with the council shortly. Thereafter we shall be discussing our requirements for future years when we have had the advice of the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food on the allocation of research resources.

Foodstuffs (Exports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1981 to 1984 and to the latest available date exports of basic foodstuffs by the European Economic Community and the amount spent by way of export restitutions on the same basis as that given on 4 December 1981, *Official Report*, column *266*.

Mr. MacGregor: The following table updates as far as possible the information given in the reply of 4 December 1981. The latest available information on exports from all Community countries relates to the period January to March 1984:

	Total European Community Exports ('000 Tonnes)*				*Expenditure on Export Refunds† (MECU)*			
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984‡ Jan-Mar*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Wheat	10,631	9,477	12,122	2,981	n/a	n/a	825·2	507·
Wheat flour	3,409	3,218	2,048	954				
Barley	5,269	2,581	3,749	1,056	n/a	n/a	405·5	252·
Rye	257	49	10	32	n/a	n/a	294·3	158·
Other cereals	—	—	—	—	n/a	n/a		
Total cereals (excluding rice)	—	—	—	—	1206·3	1064·9	1525·0	918·
Butter and butteroil	455	375	330	84	n/a	n/a	498·8	589·
Skimmed milk powder	501	352	192	60	n/a	n/a	151·2	353·
Other milk and milk products	—	—	—	—	n/a	n/a	676·8	1000·
Total milk and milk products	—	—	—	—	1,886·3	1,521·3	1,326·8	1,943·
Sugar (refined)	4,635	4,699	4,191	925	409·2	744·0	758·1	1,190·

* EC10 excluding intra Community trade.

† Figures include refunds on food aid.

‡ Latest figures available are for January to March 1984 only.

‖ Latest estimate in the 1984 supplementary and amending budget No. 1 including transfers.

Source: EUROSTATE.
EC Commission EAGGF Financial Reports.

Imported Foodstuffs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what respect the formula for calculating the United Kingdom levy on imported foodstuffs under the common agricultural policy has been changed since the answer of 22 December 1981 to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, columns 360-62.

Mr. MacGregor: The method of calculating the levy applicable in the United Kingdom remains as explained by my right hon. Friend in his reply of 22 December 1981 at column 362. However, when the monetary compensatory amount (MCA) is negative, as at present, the MCA is deducted from the levy. The MCA and monetary coefficients set for the United Kingdom are, of course, subject to variation.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amounts held in intervention in the European Economic Community under the common agricultural policy at the latest available date.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 14 January at column 30. The note referred to in that reply was updated on 1 February.

European Community Levies

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date his answer of 20 July 1983, *Official Report*

columns 133-36 concerning the effective incidence of the European Economic Community levies on prices, by including figures for the first Tuesday in July 1984 and the latest available date.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as follows. I must once again remind the hon. Member that the "world" prices derived for this calculation do not represent those which might obtain were more supplies obtained from non-Community sources.

United Kingdom Levy as Percentage of (a) the Intervention Price in the United Kingdom and (b) the World Price

Per cent.

	3 July 1984		*13 February 1985*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
Beef and veal	69	154	68	142
Pigmeat	26	28	24	24
Poultrymeat	—	18	—	17
Eggs	—	98	—	34
Butter	62	127	67	146
Skimmed milk powder	69	161	62	121
Common wheat	54	66	33	33
Barley	51	60	37	40
Sugar	77	224	77	213

Notes:

* "Intervention prices" have been taken as:
Beef and veal—intervention price converted to carcase equivalent using 54·4 per cent. killing-out coefficient.
Pigmeat—lowest intervention price.
Butter—intervention price for 82 per cent. butter.
Skimmed milk powder—intervention price.
Common wheat—reference price for wheat of minimum bread-making quality.
Barley—intervention price.
Sugar—intervention price for white sugar plus storage levy.
There are no intervention prices for poultrymeat and eggs.

† "World prices" have been calculated by subtracting the common levy in ECU from the threshold guide price in ECU. The beef price is also adjusted for duty. In the case of pigmeat, poultrymeat and eggs the "world price" has been taken as the sluicegate price less supplementary levy where appropriate.

‡ The levies taken are at the full rate. In the case of beef, butter and sugar the United Kingdom obtains a large proportion of its supplies at reduced rates of levy.

Dairy Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the number of jobs which have been lost as a result of the reduction in dairy output, distinguishing between agriculture and processing, the amount of compensation paid under the terms of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the amount of compensation so far committed to farmers under the £50 million scheme.

Mr. Jopling: No. The available information is not in sufficient detail to enable an estimate to be made of job losses or to calculate the redundancy payments directly attributable to the reduction in dairy output.

The amount of payments so far committed under the milk supplementary levy (outgoers) scheme is slightly under £27 million.

Waste (Sea Disposal)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of loads of *(a)* sewage sludge, *(b)* industrial waste and *(c)* dredged spoils destined for sea disposal were sampled in each of the last five years; (2) what proportion of sewage sludge was dumped at sea in each year since 1970.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies his Department has made, is conducting, plans to make or is aware of, concerning the effects of organo-phosphorus pesticides on birds.

Mrs. Fenner: The investigation of reported wildlife incidents by the Agriculture Departments enables us to assess the direct effects of pesticides on birds and other animals.

The replacement of persistent organochlorine compounds by less persistent organo-phosphorus pesticides did result in some problems involving particular species of birds. Our surveillance allowed action to be taken quickly to reduce these identified risks.

My Department is also investigating the effects of pesticides on bird behaviour and is funding a field study of the effects of insecticide use in forestry on bird population.

I refer the hon. Member to the paper entitled "The Environmental Cost of Pesticide Usage in the United Kingdom" which was placed in the Library of the House recently.

PRIME MINISTER

European Community (Policy Review)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will report on the progress made as a result of the radical review by the European Community Commission of Community policies in 1980-81 mentioned in her answer of 5 June 1980, *Official Report*, column 778.

The Prime Minister: The review led to the negotiations launched by the European Council in Stuttgart in June 1983. With the successful conclusions of these negotiations at Fontainebleau, the Community has agreed:

(a) a radical reform of Community budget arrangements;
(b) a system for keeping spending, particularly on agriculture, under control.

EC (Own Resources)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what is the expected increase in own resources of the EEC in the current year in real terms; what this represents in terms of 1984 European currency units; and how much of this amount would go to agriculture if the share taken by agriculture remained the same as in 1984.

The Prime Minister: The expected increase in 1985 in the total revenues available to the Community within the existing 1 per cent. VAT ceiling is 3·3 per cent. in real terms, equal to 840 mecus in 1984 values. Of this 588 mecus would be spent on agriculture if the agricultural share of the budget remained at its 1984 level.

Teachers (School Meals)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister, further to her reply to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir. B. Rhys Williams), 12 February, *Official Report*, column

102, what the £38 million spent on providing teachers with free school meals represents per teacher who receives free school meals; and whether this amount is tax-free or declared as part of earnings.

The Prime Minister: The estimate of £38 million was based on the number of teachers who took a "free" meal on the day of the annual census. Information is not available on the number of free meals take per teacher per year.

Taxability depends on the particular circumstances, but generally subsidised or free meals are not chargeable to tax where the employee is earning less than £8,500 per year or where the meals are provided on the employer's premises for employees generally.

Ministerial Duties

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister what was the average presence per night during January by the Scottish Office, Northern Ireland Office and Welsh Office Ministers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, respectively.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, on Monday, 25 February 1985 at column *39;* the Secretary of State for Scotland on Thursday, 21 February 1985 at column *575;* and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on Wednesday, 13 February 1985 at column *180*.

VE Day

Mr. George Robertson asked the Prime Minister if any formal or informal request was made by the Government of the Soviet Union to bring to Britain for the anniversary of VE Day, the Sword of Stalingrad presented to that city by Sir Winston Churchill; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received no such request. However, I understand that the Soviet authorities have indicated informally to the Imperial War Museum that it might be possible to borrow the Sword of Stalingrad for inclusion in an exhibition which the museum plans to mount in May.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister if she will specify, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) *Official Report*, 19 February, columns 406-7, the date of the start of the production period for plutonium for defence requirements to which she referred in describing the plutonium production for defence purposes that followed the initial stoppage after the then Prime Minister's statement of 21 April 1964.

The Prime Minister: It is not in the national interest to give details of the production of plutonium for defence purposes.

British National Oil Corporation

Mr. Ian Lloyd asked the Prime Minister whether any review of the British National Oil Corporation is taking place within her policy advisory group; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to publish the specific subjects on which the policy unit advises me. In the course of its normal duties, the policy unit provides advice on a wide variety of issues.

Ministry of Defence (Cleaners)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister what representation she has received from the Transport and General Workers Union concerning the dismissal of cleaners at the Ministry of Defence; what reply she has sent; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received one letter from the Transport and General Workers Union and one letter from a Member of Parliament. I understand that the subject was also raised with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on Thursday 21 February. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has been investigating this matter and is, I understand, replying today on my behalf to the letters to which I have referred.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister how, pursuant to her answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column 133-34, the severe limitation on the amount of fluoride which could enter the water supply at any one time in the event of a malfunction in monitoring equipment is achieved; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The amount of fluoride entering the supply at any one time is limited by the design of the dosing pump and the existence of a "day" tank with a maximum capacity of one day's supply. At sources which produce a steady flow of water, the pump operates near to its design capacity. At sources where the flow is variable a flow meter regulates the amount of fluoride. If the flow meter breaks down the dosing pump stops.

SCOTLAND

Drug Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to expand the number of drug rehabilitation centres; and what is the projection of the numbers needing treatment.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on 20 February at columns *459-62*. No firm estimate can be given of the number of drug misusers who may seek treatment.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many rehabilitation centres for drug addicts are presently operating in Scotland; and how many addicts are registered at each.

Mr. John MacKay: As part of the Government's information and education campaign against drug misuse which was launched on 27 February, the Scottish Health Education Group has published a pamphlet listing services available for drug misusers. A copy of this pamphlet, which is entitled "Drug Abuse—a Register of Helping Agencies" has been placed in the Library.

It is not the function of these centres to maintain a register of drug misusers.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board area the number of private hospitals, giving the number of beds in each hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Private Nursing Homes and Hospitals in Scotland (February 1985)

Health Board Area and Private Nursing Home/ Hospital	*Bed Complement*
Argyll and Clyde	
Princess Louise hospital	297
Argyle Lodge	21
Drumadoon	32
Cairndhu House	26
Moredun	25
St. Mary's hospital	90
Ayrshire and Arran	
Auchenbeg	22
Blair lodge	30
Glenfairn	40
Grange	18
Malin Court	7
Silverdale	32
West Bank	22
Windyhall	30
Craigdhu	25
The Queens	16
Arisaig	18
Borders	
St. Andrew's convent	56
St. Aidan's hospital	74
St. Mary's hospital	75
Dumfries and Galloway	
Moat Brae	23
Fife	
Craigmount	21
Duncraggan	20
Forth Valley	
Stirling District	16
Dalmair	30
Viewforth	22
Strathcarron hospice	13
Grampian	
Devanna Gardens	46
Hillside House	25
House of Corse	20
St. Andrew's	30
St. John's	36
Greater Glasgow	
Bon Secours hospital	59
Bon Secours nursing home	9
Elmtree	32
Eastpark children's nursing home	48
Glenafton	30
Hillside	17
Huntershill	56
Jewish Old Age home	24
Kensington	12
Langside	22
Lyndale	22
Nuffield McAlpine	32
Rodel	29
St. Andrew's	24
St. Francis Geriatric	9
St. Francis maternity	48
St. Margaret's hospice	
Wilmar	
Ross Hall hospital	1
Cleveden Lodge	
Cottage Homes	
Highland	
Bellevue	
Fairburn	
Fairfield	
Carnoch	
Duncraig	
St. Vincent's	
The Croft	
Hebron House	
Lanarkshire	
Blyth Holme	
Collisdene	
Ellenvale	
Kirkdene	
Avonbridge	
Lothian	
Abercorn	
Ashfield	
Auchlea	
Belleville Lodge	
Croston Lodge	
Dean Carlton	
Dunvegan	
Edinburgh Private clinic	
Fairmile	
Findhorn	
Glencairn Towers	
Huntly	
Hilton Lodge	
Kingsknowe	
Merchiston	
Millford	
Murrayfield hospital	6
Portree	2
Queensberry Lodge	5
Regis	2
Reston House	1
Rutherford Morrison	3
St. Anne's	2
St. Columba's hospice	4
St. Rule's	2
Servite convent	3
Skye	2
Lewenhall	2
St. Raphael's	4
Tayside	
Fernbrae	3
Westbay	1
Roundel Wood	5
St. Johnstoun's	2

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State fo Scotland what was the total number of jobs in Scotland i manufacturing industry at the latest available date and o the equivalent dates in *(a)* 1955, *(b)* 1965, *(c)* 1975 an *(d)* 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Estimates of employees i employment in manufacturing industry for 1955 are n available on a comparable basis to estimates for 1965 an subsequent years. From 1965 estimates are available fo June each year, and for 1965 and 1975, based on the 196 standard industrial classification, are 725,000 and 637,00

respectively. Estimates for June 1975, 1979 and 1984, based on the 1980 standard industrial classification, are 644,000, 606,000 and 437,000 respectively. The estimate for September 1984, the latest available date, is 436,000. The estimates for 1984 are provisional, and are not seasonally adjusted.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his estimates of the number of jobs in Scotland associated with North sea oil and gas in each of the past six years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Employment in firms in Scotland identified by the Manpower Services Commission as being wholly related to North sea oil and gas activity is estimated to have been as follows for the period 1979 to 1984.

June	*Thousands*
1979	41·8
1980	46·3
1981	49·6
1982	58·3
1983	63·3
1984	64·0

Recent forecasts of oil and gas reserves by both the Department of Energy and the oil industry itself augur well for future levels of oil-related employment in Scotland.

Immigration and Emigration

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of *(a)* immigration into Scotland and *(b)* emigration out of Scotland in each of the past six years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: Estimates, which are subject to sampling error, particularly in relation to migration with countries outside the United Kingdom, are given in the table. They are for the period 1 July to 30 June in each case.

Estimated migration

	To Scotland (thousands)	*From Scotland (thousands)*
1978-79	59	74
1979-80	57	73
1980-81	59	82
1981-82	57	72
1982-83	55	73
1983-84	59	69

Labour Statistics (Glasgow)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been *(a)* the average number of unemployed in the city of Glasgow and *(b)* the average number of vacancies advertised in jobcentres in the city of Glasgow, in each of the last six years for which figures are available;

(2) if he will list the number of people in *(a)* the city of Glasgow and *(b)* Scotland who have been unemployed for (i) less than one year, (ii) more than one year but less than two years, (iii) more than two years but less than three years and (iv) more than three years at the latest available date; if he will list the numbers unemployed in these categories on the equivalent dates in each of the last six years; and if he will further break down the figures for the city of Glasgow into the following age groups *(a)* 16 to 18 years, *(b)* 18 to 25 years, *(c)* 25 to 50 years and *(d)* over 50 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's letter to him of 22 October. The information is available in the House of Commons Library, with the exception of the vacancies information which is available only according to the numbers notified, not advertised. Furthermore the unemployment figures are not directly comparable due to the change in the basis of the count in October 1982.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of redundancies notified in the city of Glasgow in each of the past six years for which figures are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The table shows the number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers, which were notified to the Manpower Services Commission as having occurred in the former Glasgow travel-to-work area (TTWA) during the years 1979-84. Comparable figures for the Glasgow city area could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

	Redundancies Glasgow TTWA
1979	11,399
1980	17,793
1981	15,095
1982	11,512
1983	8,863
1984	*5,879

Note:
Glasgow TTWA comprised the jobcentre areas of Glasgow city, Barrhead, Clydebank, Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch.
* Provisional.

Training Schemes (Glasgow)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in each of the following age categories in the city of Glasgow were on Government training schemes at the latest available date and on the equivalent date in each of the last six years *(a)* 16 to 18-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 25-year-olds, *(c)* 25 to 50-year-olds, and *(d)* over 50-year-olds.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I regret that information by age group is not available by individual Government training scheme nor aggregated for the city of Glasgow for the period requested. However, at the end of January 1984 and January 1985 (the latest date for which comparative figures are available) there were respectively 5,842 and 6,324 young people (generally 16 and 17-year-olds) on the youth training scheme and 890 and 721 adults on the training opportunities scheme in the city. In addition Glasgow residents are participating in or will have benefited from training programmes run under the Manpower Services Commission's direct training services, the priority skills national grants programme, the open tech programme and through industrial training boards.

Skillcentres (Strathclyde)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many skillcentres there are in Strathclyde region: and if he will give the number of training opportunities provided at each skillcentre.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There are five skillcentres and two annexes in Strathclyde region. The table shows the number of training opportunities purchased by the MSC at each in 1984-85.

	Number
Bellshill	204
Bellshill annex	72
Dumbarton	86
Hillington	146
Hillington annex	26
Queenslie	124
Irvine	98
	756

General Needs Housing Association

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland hwo many tenanted houses of General Needs Housing Association houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland with a discount; and what proportion this is in percentage terms and numbers of the total stock of General Needs Housing Association houses; and which housing association houses have been involved.

Mr. Ancram: The total of houses sold to sitting tenants with a discount up to 31 December 1984 is 45. Details of the sales are given in the following table. This total represents less than 1 per cent. of the housing association general needs stock in Scotland.

Housing Association and Location	*Number of Houses Sold at a Discount*
Clyde Housing Association Ltd.	
Inverkip	24
Glasgow Fair Housing Association Ltd.	
Rutherglen (1)	3
Glasgow-Partick (2)	
Gorgie-Dalry Housing Association Ltd.	
Edinburgh	12
Lowlands Housing Society Ltd.	
Kelso	6
	45

EC Grants (Edinburgh)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, with reference to his reply on 4 February, *Official Report*, column 428, publishing a table of European Economic Community grants in the Edinburgh area, whether he will give further information on *(a)* what infrastructure projects are involved and *(b)* which industrial projects are involved.

Mr. Younger: The table shows commitments from the European regional development fund (ERDF) for infrastructure and industrial projects in the present Edinburgh travel-to-work area during the period 1975-84. ERDF assistance for industrial projects represents a reimbursement to the United Kingdom Government of regional aids to industry.

Infrastructure Authority	*Project*	£
Scottish Development Agency	Factory units	97,748
Edinburgh district council	Site servicing	27,300
Edinburgh district council	Site servicing	443,246
Forth Ports Authority	Grain plant	315,000
Scottish Development Agency	Drainage and water supply	9,167
Edinburgh district council	Site servicing	45,900
Lothian regional council	Water supply	12,000
Edinburgh district council	Site servicing	525,000
Lothian regional council	Water filtration plant	144,000
Lothian regional council	Reservoir	87,000
Freightliner	Container storage facilities	25,050
Lothian regional council	City Bypass Road	1,434,336
Forth Ports Authority	Grain handling facilities	250,000
Lothian regional council	Sewer	54,000
Lothian regional council	Sewer	182,400
Lothian regional council	Improvements to B730	360,000
	Total	4,012,147

Industry Firm	
Nuclear Enterprises Ltd.	47,000
Brown Bros. and Co.	52,079
Wm Muir Bond 9 Ltd.	102,325
Hewlett-Packard Ltd.	241,250
Hewlett-Packard Ltd.	1,476,600
Total	1,919,254

"Broadleaves in Britain"

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the non-governmental organisations which have requested the Forestry Commission that they be given an opportunity to have detailed discussions with the Forestry Commission on the consultation paper "Broadleaves in Britain" but which the Forestry Commission has not met for such discussions; and if he will seek to ensure that the Forestry Commission agrees to meet these organisations for such discussions;

(2) if non-governmental conservation organisations are to be given the same opportunity to have detailed

discussions individually with the Forestry Commission on the consultation paper "Broadleaves in Britain" as has been given to other non-governmental organisations.

Mr. John MacKay: In the course of drawing up draft policy proposals for broadleaved woodlands for discussion at the seminar to be held on 8 May, the Forestry Commission has not only had the benefit of the many comments it received in response to its consultative paper, but has also had meetings to discuss certain ideas with a number of selected government and non-government organisations. Not all the bodies participating in these discussions had requested meetings with the commission, nor did the commission find it necessary to have meetings with all the bodies that had asked for them. The bodies in the latter category are: The Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth, the North York Moors national park and the Yorkshire Dales national park.

I see no justification for intervening in the commission's handling of this exercise.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the governmental and non-governmental organisations with which the Forestry Commission has had discussions on the consultation paper "Broadleaves in Britain" since the paper was published.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has had discussions with the following organisations:

Government organisations
Countryside Commission, Countryside Commission for Scotland, Nature Conservancy Council.
Non-Government organisations
Timber Growers UK, British Timber Merchants' Association (England and Wales), Institute of Chartered Foresters, National Farmers' Union, Country Landowners' Association.
In addition, the Forestry Commission is currently having discussions with a number of Government Departments.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the proportion of broadleaved to coniferous trees at which the Forestry Commission will consider a woodland to be a broadleaved woodland for the purposes of the "Broadleaves in Britain" review and for the purposes of administering the guidelines on woodland management proposed in the review;

(2) if he will define, for the purposes of the Forestry Commission's "Broadleaves in Britain" review, the term broadleaved woodland.

Mr. John MacKay: The generally accepted definition of broadleaved woodland is woodland that is predominantly broadleaved in character. The question of the acceptable proportion of conifers to broadleaves in a range of circumstances is still under consideration as part of the review.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many private woodlands foresters were employed by the Forestry Commission at district level in *(a)* April 1980 and *(b)* June 1984, after forest and district reorganisation; and how many will be employed in June 1985 after conservancy reorganisation.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Conservation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy with regard to conservation issues and bodies.

Mr. Ancram: In the exercise of his functions and in responding to representations from conservation bodies my right hon. Friend has particular regard to the conservation of the natural beauty and wildlife of the countryside.

Chief Inspector of Prisons (Reports)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether reports have been received from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on the Barlinnie special unit, on Friarton young offenders institution, on Glenochil young offenders institution and detention centre and on Polmont borstal.

Mr. Younger: HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland has submitted to me reports on his inspections of the Barlinnie special unit, on Friarton young offenders' institution, on Glenochil young offenders' institution and detention centre, and on Polmont borstal. I have today placed copies of the reports in the Library, together with my response to the recommendation he has made; and am sending a copy to the Members in whose constituency the establishments are located; to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs; to the chairman of the Scottish all-party penal affairs group and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security (Equality of Treatment)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to monitor the operation of the directive on equal treatment for men and women in social security matters; and what types of statistics are being compiled by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: Normal managerial monitoring arrangements are being complemented with studies by the Department's policy inspectorate. In the case of supplementary benefit and family income supplement records are being kept of the number of successful and unsuccessful claims by women for themselves and their partners, and in the case of supplementary benefit the number of cases in which there has been a change of claimant from the man to the women. In the case of national insurance benefits statistical returns have been amended to reflect the equal treatment provisions.

NHS (Managers)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that National Health Service general managers who have previously been administrators understand the distinction between administration and management.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes.

Re-establishment Centres

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of running re-establishment centres.

Mr. Whitney: The approximate annual cost of running re-establishment centres is £2 million.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what monitoring of the direct savings arising out of his amended limited list will be undertaken.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: General practitioner prescribing is already monitored and will continue to be so.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to discuss the implications of his amended limited list on the dental profession with the dental formulary sub-committee of the joint formulary committee.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The detailed views of the dental profession were taken into account in producing the final version of the list. Our Chief Dental Officer wrote to the chairmen of the dental formulary sub-committee of the joint formulary committee on 21 February 1985 giving details of the amended limited list and expressing willingness to discuss with the committee how best its professional expert advice could be used in the future administration of the list.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why, in relation to his amended limited list, doctors will be required to write out a prescription for some generic substances when only patent protected brands are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Few of the drugs on the extended list are under patent, though many are currently available only as branded products. Such drugs will be described by their generic or approved names wherever possible as this will lead to savings when, in due course, unbranded equivalents became available. Where brand names are included in the list it is because there is at present no non-proprietary name for the drug in question.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies he intends to conduct in order to monitor the extent of television promotions of drugs and the demand for drugs not available on prescription within the National Health Service in connection with his proposed limited list after this has been implemented on 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to monitor the extent of television advertising of drugs which are no longer available on National Health Service prescription. It is entirely a matter for manufacturers how much they spend on this or any other way of advertising such drugs. No special steps will be taken to monitor non-NHS sales of drugs, for which detailed information is not in any case available.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the medical profession subsequent to his statement in the House on 21 February on limited list prescribing about *(a)* the adequacy of the revised limited list and *(b)* poss exemptions from the limited list; and if he will ma statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received no representations from the medical profession.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for So Services if he will answer questions about the total nur of prescriptions issued for drugs which are no longer t available on National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not disclose prescri figures for individual named drugs because information is of commercial value.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for So Services what was the aggregate number of prescript dispensed, subdivided by category of product, for products to be excluded from National Health Ser prescription under his limited list proposals in the last for which figures are available; and what percentage total and by category, these prescriptions constituted o National Health Service prescriptions dispensed in category.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In England in 1983, the last for which information is available, the numbers prescriptions for those medicines to be excluded f NHS prescription from 1 April 1985 by category, those numbers as a percentage of the total numbe prescriptions in each category, were as follows:

	Column 1 Number of prescriptions for excluded medicines	*Colu Column 1 percentage prescript*
Analgesics for mild to moderate pain	12,052,000	
Antacids	5,182,000	
Benzodiazepines	18,925,000	
Bitters and tonics	904,000	
Vitamin preparations	4,506,000	
Cough and cold remedies	15,599,000	
Laxatives	1,204,000	
Total	58,370,000	

All figures are estimates based on a 1 in 200 sample prescriptions dispensed by retail chemists and applia contractors. The figures are rounded to the nearest 1,0

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for So Services what proportion of the estimated savings of million from the imposition of his limited prescribing will result from the withdrawal from National He Service prescriptions of substances which can be obtai without any prescription but which, prior to introduction of the limited list, could be issued prescription at a doctor's discretion.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information could obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for So Services how Distalgesic is to be prescribed by gene practitioners following the introduction of the Natio Health Service limited drugs list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Distalgesic is a brand name a tablet containing a mixture of two drugs which is out patent. It will not be prescribable as a branded product the National Health Service after 1 April, but the particu

combination of drugs that it and other brands contain will continue to be prescribable as "dextropropoxyphene and paracetamol tablets". When a pharmacists receives such a prescription he will dispense which ever branded product he has in stock. This may be Distalgesic or it may be one of the alternative brands, currently Cosalgesic and Dextrogesic. We anticipate that manufacturers will soon produce unbranded dextropropoxyphene and paracetamol tablets. When this happens it will no longer be necessary for pharmacists to dispense a branded product.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which products on his amended limited list of prescribable drugs are currently manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what calculations have been made by his Department of the increase of imports arising from the introduction of his amended limited list;

(2) whether all the products on his amended limited list are currently manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our inquiries of wholesalers and generic manufacturers suggest that for the most part demand for the products in question can be met from United Kingdom sources. It is not possible to make precise forecasts since much will depend on market forces, especially in the period immediately after 1 April. Any finished products which are imported will, of course, have to meet our normal standards of safety, quality and efficacy.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many products on the proposed list of drugs and other substances not to be available at National Health Service expense, as published on 21 February, have been included in error; and what steps he proposes to take to inform the medical profession of the position.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposed list of drugs and other substances not to be available at National Health Service expense as published on 21 February included a small number of products in error. All those who had received copies of the list were immediately sent details of the need to delete six items. The definitive list, included as a schedule to regulations laid on 1 March contains further minor corrections. Copies will be sent to all doctors later this month.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the aggregate number of National Health Service prescriptions written for Barker's Liquid of Life, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, Mrs. Cullen's Powders and Rock Salmon Cough Medicine in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not aware of any prescriptions for these products under the National Health Service in the last three years. However, they are all prescribable products falling within the therapeutic categories covered by the limited list. They have been included in the list of drugs and other substances not to be available at NHS expense, as published on 21 February, so that savings are not eroded by prescriptions for these or similar products as replacements for others to be removed from NHS supply.

Private Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which authorities are providing training for staff in private residential care homes; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the provision of in-service training of staff in such homes;

(2) how many private residential care homes have been registered by each of the registering authorities since 1 January;

(3) which authorities have appointed specific members of staff to act as registration officers; and how many of these staff combine the function of registration officer and inspector of private residential care homes;

(4) where dual registration is appropriate for a private residential care home, on how many occasions such a registration has been approved by the health authority but refused by the social services authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is primarily for those who run these homes to arrange for the training of their staff. "Home Life", a code of practice for residential care, which we have endorsed and commended to local authorities as general guidance, encourages the registration authority to provide assistance with training. Information is not held centrally about which local authorities are doing so, nor about the other matters raised by the hon. Member.

Junior Doctors (Promotion)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of junior doctors employed by the National Health Service have received promotion to a higher post during the last four years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Blood Donor Sessions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reply he has received from the regional medical officer of the North-East Thames regional health authority in response to the proposals he has sent to him in respect of a pilot trial relating to the presence of doctors and nurses at blood donor sessions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have made no proposals to the regional medical officer. He is proposing a pilot trial in which nurses will be substituted for doctors at blood donor sessions. We have asked him to seek the views of the Advisory Committee on the National Blood Transfusion Service before putting such a trial into practice. He has not yet responded.

Doctors (Sleeping Arrangements)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he intends to issue to regional health authorities about sleeping-in arrangements for doctors while on call.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Doctors who are required to stay overnight in hospital while on duty are entitled under their terms of service to free accommodation. We have no plans to change this arrangement.

Hospital Doctors

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent rota commitments in respect of hours of work of junior hospital doctors have varied from year to year since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not routinely collect this kind of information. A special survey of health authorities in 1983 showed that between 30 November 1982 and 1 August 1983 the number of junior hospital medical posts with regular rota commitments requiring doctors to be on duty more than one night and one weekend in three fell or was planned to fall from 5,000 to 4,000. Since 1 July 1983 regular commitments more onerous than one night and one weekend in two have required central approval. In the year to date, the number of such approvals in force has fallen from 30 to eight.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Srvices what reply he has received from the joint consultants' committee in response to the report he sent to it in December in respect of 38 medical and 66 surgical vacant posts for pre-registration house officers, and of 57 unplaced graduates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The report was for a regular meeting pre-arranged between the joint consultants' committee (JCC) and our Department for January 1985. It could only state the figures of posts known in December 1984 to be available in February 1985 and of graduates (ie provisionally registered doctors requiring pre-registration house officer (PRHO) posts with a view to full registration with the General Medical Council) unplaced for February 1985. 57 graduates were unplaced in December 1984 but this meant that the majority (about 2,800) had already made satisfactory arrangements for February 1985. The figures were updated at the JCC—DHSS meeting in January when the number of unplaced graduates was six. The figures of vacant posts then were 75 total, 24 medical and 51 surgical. JCC noted the position.

On a JCC query about prospects for August 1985, our Department expressed cautious optimism. There has been no subsequent approach from the JCC. The latest information confirms that all graduates seeking PRHO posts were placed by February 1985.

Resettlement Centres

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he has had, or intends to have, with Civil Service unions about his decision to close the 23 resettlement centres for the homeless.

Mr. Whitney: A meeting was held between my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Social Security and the Disabled and the Departmental trade union side on 20 November 1984 to discuss the future of the Department's resettlement units and re-establishment centres. A further meeting has been arranged for 5 March following which consultations will continue to take place at official level through the Department's Whitley machinery.

Radical Cystectomy Treatment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to promote radical cystectomy treatment within the National Health Service for elderly patients with advanced bladder cancer.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. Responsibility fo choice of treatments for each patient lies wit individual clinician.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Sta Social Services what plans he has to monitor figu respect of the survival rate of patients over the age years resulting from radical cystectomy surgery.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collec information required to monitor the survival rates o patients and have no plans to do so.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for S Services in which cases, or classes of cases, he acc claim for a supplementary benefit single payment than in writing.

Mr. Whitney: We have not specified the class cases in which claims for single payment supplementary benefit can be accepted other tha writing. While such claims should normally be ma writing, our local offices would accept an oral claim v the circumstances made it reasonable to do so.

Resettlement and Re-establishment Centres

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for S Services (1) what plans he has to consult the relevant unions before making a statement on the futue o settlement and re-establishment centres;

(2) when he expects to make a statement on the f of re-settlement and re-establishment centres.

Mr. Whitney: I would refer the hon. Member t hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Membe Elmet (Mr. Batiste), on 5 February at column *548-4*

NHS (Drugs Bill)

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for S Services to what extent the National Health Service c bill was reduced as a result of *(a)* the 2·5 per reduction in National Health Service medicine p agreed with pharmaceutical manufacturers in August and *(b)* the reduction by 4 percentage points in the r on capital allowed under the pharmaceutical price scheme to pharmaceutical manufacturers with effect April 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The annual value (U Kingdom) of the August 1983 price reduction, and reductions in the rates of return on capital allowed 1 April 1984 are estimated at £35 million and £65 mi respectively.

"The Health Service in England"

Mr. Cook asked the Secretary of State for S Services if, with reference to his Department's pamp "The Health Service in England", he will state the cost of producing and distributing it *(a)* in Eng generally and *(b)* in the Northern region specifically.

Mr. John Patten: The cost to the Departmen producing and distributing the leaflet to National He Service regional health authorities was £6,370. L distribution arrangements were left to the regional he authorities themselves.

Mr. Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, with reference to his Department's pamphlet, "The Health Service in England", he will produce a subsequent pamphlet outlining in detail the results of the implementation of Government policy on the National Health Service.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Child Benefit

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost of indexing child benefit in line with the expected rate of inflation between 1984-85 and 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: If child benefit were to be increased in November 1985 by 4·75 per cent., in line with the general assumption in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd. 9428), the estimated gross cost of child benefit would be £163 million higher in 1985-86 than in 1984-85. The corresponding estimated net cost would be £125 million.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is aware of any studies relating to myopia in connection with organophosphorus pesticide exposure among schoolchildren in Japan; and what studies have been conducted into similar effects in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Carr-Gomm Charity

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money his Department has given, either directly or indirectly, to the Carr-Gomm charity in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The Carr-Gomm charity was given the sum of £1,660 for the year 1982-83, no finance was given for the year 1983-84, and £2,140·50 for the year 1984-85 from this Department.

State Pension

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost of indexing the basic state pension for single pensioners and married couples in line with the expected rate of inflation between 1984-85 and 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: If the basic retirement pension where to be increased by 4·75 per cent. in November 1985, in line with the general assumption in the Government's expenditure plans for 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd. 9428), the estimated gross cost would be £1,000 million higher in 1985-86 than in 1984-85. The corresponding estimated new cost would be £800 million.

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the costs of increasing the basic state pension by £5 per week for single pensioners and £8 per week for married couples in 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated full year cost of increasing the basic retirement pension by £5 per week for single pensioners and £8 for couples in 1985-86 would be £2,200 million gross and £1,600 million net.

Child Benefit

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of *(a)* increasing child benefit by £1 per child per week and *(b)* increasing child benefit by £3 per child per week in 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated full year cost of increasing child benefit by £1 a week in 1985-86 would be £640 million gross or £490 million net. The corresponding figures for a £3 a week increase would be £1,920 million and £1,470 million.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of extending long-term supplementary benefit to people who have been unemployed for more than 12 months in 1985-86, giving the gross and net full year costs.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Children's Nurses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many nurses hold the Royal Society of Children's Nurses qualification in each region; how many children's wards are in charge of a nurse without that qualification; and what is the estimated need in each region for established Royal Society of Children's Nurses posts;

(2) how many training places for Royal Society of Children's Nurses there are in each region; and whether there are any plans to increase the number of such places.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member would appear to be seeking information about nurses holding the registered sick children's nurse qualification. We are advised by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting that the number of training places in each region for the qualification are:

	Number
Northern	20
Yorkshire	50
Trent	180
East Anglian	20
North West Thames	130
North East Thames	270
South West Thames	100
South East Thames	75
Wessex	20
Oxford	30
South Western	20
West Midlands	100
Mersey	220
North Western	240

It is for individual health authorities to determine the number of training places they require and also the need for nurses with the RSCN qualification in the light of local needs and circumstances.

We do not collect centrally information on the number of nurses holding the RSCN qualification in each region or the number of children's wards in the charge of a nurse without that qualification.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Chief Nursing Officer intends to issue guidelines on children's nursing.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the Chief Nursing Officer has no plans to issue fresh guidance on children's nursing at present.

Public Health Laboratory Service

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he is considering for the future management and financing of the 52 regional and area laboratories of the public health laboratory service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A review of the public health laboratory service board has been carried out under the normal accountability arrangements for non-departmental public bodies. We will issue a report of the review for consultation in the near future and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library. We will consider the report's recommendations in the light of that consultation.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase Christmas bonuses.

Mr. Whitney: The rate of the Christmas bonus is considered each year in accordance with section 4 of the Pensioners' Payments and Social Security Act 1979. The rate will be announced and an order to give effect to the bonus for 1985 will be laid before the House in due course.

Hospital Building

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all new hospital building and extensions by regional health authority, due for completion between now and 1994, indicating the proposed numbers of beds and anticipated use.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information in the precise form requested is not available centrally but the following table lists all new hospital building schemes costing £2 million or more at the stages of planning, design, and construction.

Schemes over £2 Million in Planning, Design and under construction

Planning	*Project/Scheme*	£
Northern	Ashington Low Energy Hospital (Nucleus)	13,700,000·00
Northern	North Tyneside Scheme 3 Phase 1	11,934,000·00
Northern	Sunderland General Scheme 2 Phase 2	6,629,000·00
Northern	Sunderland General Scheme 2 Phase 3	2,024,000·00
Trent	Derby City Phase 2	6,039,000·00
Trent	Kendray Hospital—Phase 2	2,322,209·00
Trent	Kings Mill DGH Phase 3	11,357,000·00
Trent	Lincoln County Phase 2	9,900,000·00
North East Thames	Coppetts Wood	3,300,000·00
South East Thames	Hastings DGH Phase 1	26,026,000·00
South West Thames	Bognor Community Hospital	3,482,000·00
South West Thames	Royal Surrey County Guildford Phase 2	11,664,000·00
Oxford	Milton Keynes DGH Phase 2	8,990,000·00
Oxford	Stoke Mandeville Phase 4	5,910,000·00
South Western	Frenchay DGH Phase 1	
West Midlands	Anchor Meadow Community Hospital	
West Midlands	Bromsgrove Community Hospital	
West Midlands	Burton-on-Trent DGH Phase 2	
West Midlands	Cannock Community Hospital	
West Midlands	Rowley Regis Community Hospital Sandwell	
North Western	Manchester Royal Infirmary Phase 2	
North Western	Ormskirk District General Hospital Phase 1	
Northern	Furness General Scheme 2 Phase 1	
Northern	Hartlepool DGH Scheme 3 Phase 1	
Northern	Hartlepool DGH Scheme 3 Phase 2	
Northern	Kendal (Westmorland) General Scheme 1 Phase 1	
Northern	North Tyneside Scheme 2 Phase 1	
Northern	Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1 Phase 5	
Northern	South Cleveland General Scheme 2 Phase 1B	
Northern	South Shields General Scheme 3 Phase 1	
Yorkshire	Goole New Hospital	
Yorkshire	Scunthorpe DGH Phase 3B A&E Block	
Yorkshire	St. James University Hospital Leeds New Renal Unit	
Trent	Bolsover Community Hospital Development	
Trent	Chesterfield DGH Phase 2B Maternity	
Trent	Coalville Community Hospital	
Trent	Leicester Royal Infirmary Phase 4B	
Trent	Lincoln County M.I.U. Phase IC	
Trent	Northern General Geriatric	
East Anglian	Ipswich Phase 3 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)	
North West Thames	Central Middlesex Mental Illness Unit	
North West Thames	St. Albans City Hospital Development Phase 2	
North East Thames	Whittington Redevelopment Phase 1	
South East Thames	Bassetts Residential Centre—M. H. Services	
South East Thames	Eastbourne New DGH Phase 2	
South East Thames	Medway DGH Phase 3B	
South East Thames	Medway DGH Phase 3C	
South West Thames	Mid Sussex Phase 1	
Wessex	Andover Community Hospital	
Wessex	St. Marys—Isle of Wight—Phase 3B (Nucleus)	
Oxford	Heatherwood MI/EMI	
South Western	Cheltenham General Phase 1B	
South Western	Gloucester Royal Phase 4B	
South Western	Gloucester Royal Phase 4B Sub-phases 1&2	
West Midlands	Edward Street—Psychiatric/Geriatric	
West Midlands	Good Hope Phase 2	
West Midlands	Good Hope Phase 3	
West Midlands	Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—Reb. Specialties/Labs	
West Midlands	R. J. A. H. Wards & Theatres Shropshire	
West Midlands	Warwick DGH—Phase 1 (Nucleus)	
Mersey	Broadgreen Development Phase 1	
Mersey	Paediatric Cardiology Unit—Child Health Institute	
Mersey	St. Catherine's Birkenhead Redevelopment Phase 1	
Mersey	St. Helens Redevelopment Phase 1 Boiler House	
Mersey	Warrington DGH Phase 1	
North Western	Bolton DGH ESMI and Geriatric Unit	
North Western	Bolton DGH Manufacturing Pharmacy & HSDU	
North Western	Bolton DGH Phase 1	
North Western	Fairfield Catering and HSDU	
North Western	Fairfield Phase 1	
North Western	Fylde Community Hospital	
North Western	Leigh Infirmary Phase 1	
North Western	Manchester Royal Infirmary Service Complex	
North Western	North Manchester General Boiler House	
North Western	Oldham DGH Phase 1	
North Western	Peel Hall ESMI	
North Western	Pendle Community Hospital	

Planning	Project/Scheme	£
North Western	Queens Park Blackburn Phase 2 Geriatric	6,279,971·00
North Western	Whelley Hospital Phase 1	2,910,000·00
Non R.H.A.	Hammersmith Hospital Redevelopment Phase 1	12,177,300·00
Non R.H.A.	Moorfields Eye Hosp.—Redevelopment Phase 2B	2,424,600·00
Non R.H.A.	National Heart and Chest Centre Brompton Phase 1	13,748,170·00

Schemes over £2 million in planning, design and under construction

Under construction		Approved tender figure £	Estimated completion
Northern	Blyth Community Hospital & Health Centre	4,168,000·00	
Northern	Fenham Blood Transfusion Service Centre	3,537,500·00	30 June 1985
Northern	Palmer Community Hospital Jarrow	3,314,250·00	
Northern	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead Scheme 3 Phase 1	6,139,179·00	20 March 1985
Yorkshire	Bradford Royal Infirmary Nucleus Wards & Theatres	2,311,000·00	
Yorkshire	Bridlington New Hospital	11,154,408·00	13 January 1988
Yorkshire	Friarage Hospital PH 1 (Nucleus)	4,885,608·00	31 January 1987
Yorkshire	Regional Blood Transfusion Centre Seacroft Phase 1	2,131,161·85	27 January 1987
Yorkshire	Scarborough DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)	6,237,086·00	6 November 1986
Yorkshire	Scunthorpe DGH Phase 3A Service Centre	4,100,387·00	8 July 1986
Yorkshire	Staincliffe DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)	13,190,622·00	6 July 1988
Trent	Derby City Phase 1	11,862,208·92	25 February 1986
Trent	Derby Royal Infirmary Phase 2	8,428,949·00	19 January 1987
Trent	Ilkeston Community Hospital	4,563,637·85	19 December 1986
Trent	Kings Mill DGH Phase 2	2,751,813·28	
Trent	Lincoln County Phase 1A and 1B	3,240,841·00	20 June 1986
Trent	Northern General Phase 1C	5,691,383·00	28 October 1985
Trent	Pilgrim (Boston)—Phase 3	2,678,084·20	17 October 1986
Trent	Victoria Mansfield—Phase 1	2,002,667·09	November 1986
East Anglian	Peterborough 2nd DGH Phase 1	12,908,108·00	20 June 1987
East Anglian	West Suffolk Bury St. Edmunds Stage 1	2,150,253·00	23 August 1985
North West Thames	Hemel Hempstead Phase 1	5,906,036·00	11 August 1986
North West Thames	St. Charles Hospital	3,155,802·00	16 January 1985
North West Thames	St. Marys W.2. Phase 1B	20,397,915·00	15 February 1987
North East Thames	Clacton District Phase 1 Stages 1 & 2	2,887,330·00	13 February 1985
North East Thames	Colchester DGH Phase 3 Residential	2,565,700·00	March 1985
North East Thames	Harold Wood Hospital Phase 1	7,341,700·00	6 August 1986
North East Thames	Homerton (Eastern) Phase 1	13,225,741·00	4 January 1986
North East Thames	Newham Hospital Phase 2 (Nucleus)	3,944,691·00	May 1985
South East Thames	Archery House	3,340,387·47	26 April 1985
South East Thames	Buckland DGH	2,358,469·42	8 November 1986
South East Thames	Lewisham DGH Phase 1A	6,097,080·00	18 April 1985
South East Thames	Lewisham DGH Phase 1B	3,457,583·00	1 January 1987
South West Thames	St. Georges Block H Phase 2A	16,953,738·00	22 November 1987
South West Thames	St. Georges Blocks G2 & F Phase 2	9,904,806·00	3 January 1985
Wessex	Bournemouth DGH Phase 1	14,140,611·00	6 April 1987
Wessex	Royal Hampshire County Winchester Phase 4 (Nucleus)	8,943,857·00	6 December 1985
Wessex	Royal S. Hants Southampton Phase 3	9,956,349·00	17 October 1986
Wessex	Royal UnitedBath	3,962,200·63	
Wessex	West Dorset DGH Phase 1	10,480,035·00	18 November 1986
Oxford	Wexham Park EMI/MI	2,196,819·00	29 October 1985
Oxford	Wexham Park paediatric department and stores	2,155,847·00	16 March 1985
South Western	Bristol Eye Hospital	4,024,429·00	June 1985
South Western	West Somerset (Musgrove Park) DGH Phase 1	5,876,191·00	1 March 1986
South Western	Weston-Super-Mare New Hospital	11,007,359·00	21 February 1986
West Midlands	Bradwell new geriatric unit (Nucleus)	4,310,707·00	
West Midlands	Bromsgrove Redditch DGH PH 1 contract 2 (Nucleus)	15,284,659·00	26 January 1986
West Midlands	Cheadle new geriatric unit	3,300,018·00	30 September 1987
West Midlands	City General Stoke surgical accomm. (Nucleus)	13,643,875·00	
West Midlands	George Eliot Nuneaton Phase 2 (Nucleus)	4,434,122·00	
West Midlands	Good Hope Phase 1	2,976,656·00	10 May 1985
West Midlands	New Cross Wolverhampton Wards 1 & 2 (Nucleus)	3,111,025·00	11 August 1987
West Midlands	Rubery Hill regional psych. intensive care unit	3,889,096·00	26 May 1988
West Midlands	Telford DGH Phase 1	18,330,058·00	1 June 1987
West Midlands	Walsall Phases 4A & 4B (Nucleus)	14,679,257·00	10 November 1986
West Midlands	Walsgrave radiotherapy treatment unit	2,985,362·00	10 November 1987
West Midlands	Worsley-obstetrics	4,575,389·00	28 August 1987
Mersey	North Sefton DGH Southport Phase 1 (Nucleus)	16,427,000·00	
North Western	Blackpool Victoria Phase 4	2,880,493·00	15 November 1985
North Western	Fleetwood ESMI	2,048,063·00	22 November 1985
North Western	Park Hospital geriatric and rehab.	2,644,171·00	9 December 1985

Under construction		*Approved tender figure* £	*Es com*
North Western	Queens Park Blackburn Phase 1 paediatric	3,126,709·00	4 Jun
North Western	Royal Albert Edward Infirmary Wigan Phase 1	4,212,177·00	10 Marc
North Western	Tameside General Phase 2	11,389,977·00	13 Marc
Non Regional Health Authority	Moorfields Eye Hospital City Road development Phase 1	4,619,291·00	24 Ma

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new hospital developments have taken place in the Trent health region since May 1979; and if he will list them.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Meacher: asked the Secretary of St Services if he will list all current prop closures or partial closures to which com councils are objecting.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At 31 Decem following hospital closure proposals, on decisions were outstanding, had been formal community health councils:

RHA	*Whole closures*	*Partial closures*
Northern	Whickham Cottage (Gateshead HA)	—
Yorkshire	Wharfedale Children's (Airedale HA)	—
	Marguerite Hepton (Leeds Eastern HA)	—
	Grassington (Leeds Western HA)	—
North West Thames	Uxbridge Cottage (Hillingdon HA)	—
	Park (North Bedfordshire HA)	—
North East Thames	Cheshunt Cottage (Enfield HA)	Herts and Essex (West Essex HA)
	Jubilee (Waltham Forest HA)	—
South East Thames	Eltham and Mottingham (Greenwich HA)	Beckenham (Bromley HA)
	St. Nicholas (Greenwich HA)	—
	Lennard (Bromley HA)	—
South West Thames	Horsham Maternity (Mid Downs HA)	Haslemere and District (South West Surrey
South Western	—	Cossham Memorial (Frenchay HA)
West Midlands	Monroe Devis Maternity (South Warwickshire HA)	Wrekin (Shropshire HA)
	Beeches (Shropshire HA)	Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt (Shropshire
	Cross Houses (Shropshire HA)	Oswestry and District (Shropshire HA)
	Eye, Ear and Throat (Shropshire HA)	—
	Wellington Cottage (Shropshire HA)	—
Mersey	—	Women's (Liverpool HA)
	—	Sir Alfred Jones (Liverpool HA)
	—	Newsham (Liverpool HA)
North Western	Fulwood Continuation (Preston HA)	Wrightington (West Lancashire HA)

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital closures have taken place in the Trent health region since May 1979; and if he will list the hospitals affected.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The complete closure of the following hospitals in the Trent health region was approved between May 1979 and December 1984.

Nightingale maternity home
Wales Court hospital
Adbolton Hall
Smedley Memorial hospital
Parwick hospital
Tuxford hostel
Firs Maternity hospital
Thornbury hospital
Nottingham women's hospital
St. Joseph's hospital
Hallwood isolation hospital
Markfield hospital
Chesterfield Royal hospital
Alexandra hospital
Foxby Hill hospital
Zachary Merton recovery home
Ashgate maternity home
Ashgate annex E
Morton hospital
Blakeley
Draycott
Boston General
Debdale Hall recovery home
Lawn hospital
Swallow Nest hospital
Darby Hall maternity hospital
Coppice hospital
Scott Road and Commonside hostels
Aughton Court

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those hospital closures or partial closures to which community health councils have objected since 1979, indicating whether or not the closure went ahead.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make fluoride tablets available on prescription to those persons who are medically advised that they should take fluoride as a prophylactic, in areas where fluoride is not present in the water supplies at a level of one milligram per litre; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what study he has made of the findings of Edwards, Pantlos and Kroot on the effect of fluoride on hydrogen bonding in cyclochrome–c and peroxidase inhibited with fluoride; what are the implications of this research for his assessment of the safety of fluoridating water at 1 part per million; and if he will make a statement;

(3) why he has hitherto indemnified statutory water undertakers which fluoridate water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the powers of his Department to assist and provide compensation in the event of an accidental addition of fluoride to water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: During the 30 years in which water fluoridation has taken place in this country, there have been no instances of accidental fluoride poisoning as a result of excess inclusion of fluoride in the water supply. However, in the event of such an accident any person who believed he or she had suffered injury could sue for damages the relevant health or water authority or whomsoever else he or she believed to be responsible.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has to the LD50 level of fluoride ion in animals, specifying the animals involved.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *141*]: The information on poisoning by fluoride in animals, that is available, shows that toxicity is influenced by many variables. Acute lethal effects from the more toxic compounds producing fluoride ions have been reported following oral intakes between 25 and 100 milligrams (as fluorine) per kilogram of body weight. This information relates to rabbits, rats, dogs, calves, sheep and goats.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital beds have been withdrawn in the Trent region since May 1979; and if he will list the hospitals affected.

Mr. John Patten: We do not collect this sort of detailed local information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to seek information from the chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Local Authorities (Social Services)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions were made in the grant-related expenditure assessment formula regarding the need for a home help service, meals on wheels and residential care for the elderly in each of the local authorities listed in the Rate Limitation Order for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: The grant-related expenditure assessment for an authority does not constitute a prescriptive statement about what an authority should spend or needs to spend. For individual services, such as those mentioned in the hon. Member's question, formulae have been developed to assess the cost of providing a common standard of service across all authorities. These formulae are based on research into the factors which can give rise to an individual requiring personal social services. It is for each authority to determine within its overall budget how much it spends on those services and to decide on priorities as between different services.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of social security benefit paid to striking miners and their families to the nearest appropriate date.

Mr. Newton: I assume my hon. Friend has in mind benefit entitlements arising as a consequence of the dispute, rather than those arising in normal circumstances, such as the payment of child benefit.

Unemployment benefit is not payable to anyone involved in a trade dispute. Supplementary benefit is not payable to a striker for his own needs, but is payable in respect of his dependants subject to a deduction of £16 a week (£15 prior to 26 November 1984): the total of supplementary benefit paid for the dependants of striking miners up to the week ending 19 February was about £33 million. Housing benefit has no special rules for trade disputes, and it is therefore not known how much striking miners have received.

Family Income Supplement

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* his latest estimate of the number of low-paid families subject to income tax who are in receipt of family income supplement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 20 December 1984, at column *307* which is still the latest information available.

Consultants (Appointments)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the specialties in which appointments to see consultants exceed 10 weeks *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Waltham Forest health authority area.

Mr. John Patten: Information on out-patient waiting time is not collected centrally. For the Waltham Forest information the hon. Member may wish to approach the local health authority.

Hospital Doctors

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the number of posts available in the registrar grade in National Health Service hospitals has been reduced since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information on the numbers of available registrar posts. The number of registrars in post in National Health Service hospitals in England at 30 September in each year since 1981 was:

	Number
1981	5,989
1982	6,119
1983	6,183
1984	6,116

Hospital and Community Services

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what sectors of hospital and community services will benefit primarily from the £500 million which he has promised to allocate to them next year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is for health authorities to determine the way in which the additional £500 million the Government have made available to them will be used in accordance with the Government's priorities for service development.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Works Loan Commissioners

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if there has been any change in the policy of the Public Works Loan Commissioners in regard to their lending to local authorities.

Mr. Lawson: In their circular No. 76 issued today the commissioners have made it plain that there is no change in their lending policy. They expect to continue to make loans available on the terms described in their circulars to any local authority having a valid power to borrow. The commissioners could not lend to an authority which had chosen to act illegally and, more widely, they have a statutory obligation to satisfy themselves, before advancing a loan, that an authority is able to service and repay the loan.

Business Schemes (Tax Relief)

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of the provisional approval granted by the Inland Revenue for schemes qualifying for tax relief under the business extension scheme and its predecessor the business start-up scheme for each year since the schemes were introduced.

Mr. Moore: About £18 million was invested under the business start-up scheme over its two-year life from 6 April 1981 to 5 April 1983. Information about investments under the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 is not yet complete, but they are known to total at least £75 million. The direct revenue costs of the reliefs are approximately 50 per cent. of the amounts invested.

Income Tax Relief

Mr. Bellingham asked the Chancellor of Exchequer how much money has qualified for income tax relief under the business expansion scheme and its predecessor the business start-up scheme in the fiscal years 1982-83 and 1983-84; and how much of that money was invested in small businesses defined as having fewer than 200 employees and very small businesses having fewer than 50 employees.

Mr. Moore: About £18 million was invested under the business start-up scheme during 1981-82 and 1982-83—mostly during 1982-83. Information about the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 is not yet complete, but the estimates published in the "Treasury Economic Progress Report", December 1984, indicated that at least £75 million was invested in over 300 companies. On the basis of a preliminary analysis of some 230 companies receiving BES investments in 1983-84, about 98 per cent. were shown to have fewer than 200 employees; these received over 96 per cent. of the total amount invested. About 80 per cent. of companies had fewer than 50 employees; these received about 65 per cent. of total investment.

Extra-statutory Concessions

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) in which fiscal year the extra-statutory concession was introduced on housing allowances for civil servants moving to another part of the United Kingdom;

(2) on how many occasions in the last financial year the extra-statutory concession was exercised on housing allowances to civil servants moving to another part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moore: The Inland Revenue's practice of not taxing certin allowances received by employees who incur additional housing costs when compulsorily transferred to another part of the United Kingdom is not restricted to civil servants and is not an extra-statutory concession. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to a related question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) at column 159. There is no central record of the number of occasions when the practice was followed during the last financial year. This could be determined only at disproportionate cost.

Low Tax Economy

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his definition of a low tax economy refers to direct taxes or to direct and indirect taxes together.

Mr. Moore: This depends on the context, but will usually be the latter.

European Community (Payments to United Kingdom)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated total value of payments received by the United Kingdom from the European Economic Community for the year ended 31 December 1984.

Mr. Lawson: Final figures for receipts in 1984 are not yet available. The latest estimate for gross receipts plus refunds is £2,527 million.

Inland Revenue Staff

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will describe the system for determining staffing complements of Inland Revenue district offices; and if he will place a copy of these departmental instruments in the Library.

Mr. Moore: The Inland Revenue has three local office networks: the tax office network, collection network and the valuation office network. The complementing system is broadly similar for all three. The total staff needed for the network is calculated centrally on the basis of work factors—which are essentially an estimate of the time required to carry out specific elements of work—and projected work loads. These projections are based on statistics collectd from local offices and collated nationally. Once the national ceilings have been set and agreed with the Treasury, complements are then allocated to regional managers on the basis of regional work loads. Regional management then allocates complements to its local offices. This allocation is based not only on local office work loads but also on the specific circumstances of particular offices, for example calibre of staff and numbers of trainees. There are no detailed written instructions.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount by which the combined revenue obtained from income tax and national insurance contributions has increased in 1978-79 prices in each year since 1978-79; and what is the percentage increase this represents in each case.

Mr. Moore: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 21 February 1985 at column 570, from which year-to-year changes can be derived.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the effect on revenues from value added tax if all goods and services except exports, currently zero rated, were exempted from value added tax;

(2) what would be the effect on revenues from value added tax if all goods and services currently zero rated were exempted from value added tax.

Mr. Hayhoe: There would be a net increase in revenue from value added tax because the traders affected would no longer be able to reclaim tax paid on their inputs. However, I regret that it is not possible to quantify this net gain.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Neale asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he intends to make in the 714 certificate procedure to permit more participants in the enterprise allowance scheme to commence as sub-contractors immediately they cease to qualify for the allowance.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Christmas Tips

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees are estimated to be receiving Christmas tips; and *(a)* what extra revenue is expected to be raised during 1984-85 as a result of increased attention by the Inland Revenue to assessing these benefits and *(b)* what are the estimated extra administrative costs involved in collecting the tax involved.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total costs of unemployment benefit, social security and housing benefit for the unemployed, together with an estimate of revenue forgone from income tax and value added tax and other duties since 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, and 1983-84, together with his latest estimate for 1984-85.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what increases in taxation would be required if one third of the total sum raised in local rates were raised through direct taxation, value added tax, and excise duties on all items including tobacco, alcohol and petrol, respectively.

Mr Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount raised in taxation in the most recent year for which figures are available; how much of the total came from direct tax on people, indirect tax, company tax, capital tax, and other taxation, respectively; and what was the total sum raised in the same year in industrial, commercial and domestic local rates, respectively.

Mr. Moore: The information was given in replies to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 11 February 1985 at columns 60-61 and to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on 12 February 1985 at columns 102-103.

Gross Domestic Product

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage changes since the previous year of output based gross domestic product in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979, giving first the total figure then the figure excluding oil and gas extraction, then the total percentage change 1978 to 1984 for total output, output-based gross domestic product, and for output-based gross domestic product, excluding gas and oil extraction.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Tax Rates

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of introducing a 25p in pound tax rate band for the first £500, first £750 and first £1,000 of taxable income in 1985-86, in terms of lost revenue to the Exchequer.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total North sea tax receipts, royalties, petroleum revenue including advance payments, and, where applicable, corporation tax from North sea oil and gas production, and supplementary petroleum duty for 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and his latest estimate for 1984-85.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Royalties	*Supplementary petroleum duty*	*Petroleum revenue tax (including advance payments)*	*Corporation tax*	*Total North sea tax take*
1979-80	628	—	1,436	270	2,334
1980-81	992	—	2,410	480	3,882
1981-82	1,396	2,025	2,390	650	6,461
1982-83	1,632	2,395	3,274	460	7,761
1983-84	1,904	1	6,016	900	8,821

The corporation tax figures are the estimated proportion of the tax payable which can be attributed to United Kingdom and UKCS oil and gas, before setting off any advance corporation tax.

The 1984 Autumn Statement contained a forecast of £12 billion for total North sea tax take in 1984-85. Updated estimates, together with a breakdown into the individual taxes, will be published on Budget day.

Family Incomes (Taxation)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will provide an estimate of the percentage of the average household's income taken in *(a)* direct tax and the percentage of income taken and *(b)* indirect tax and such as taxes on expenditure and rates in 1984;

(2) if he will provide an estimate of the percentage of income of the richest tenth of households taken in *(a)* direct taxes and *(b)* indirect taxes in 1984.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is not available for 1984.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to answer the question from the hon. Member for Suffolk, South for answer on 14 February, about the value of approvals granted by the Inland Revenue under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Moore: I regret the delay in providing a reply to this question, which is being answered today.

"Official Report"

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects further copies of the *Official Report* for 15 January to be available following the exhaustion of the original stock over two weeks ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Copies of the relevant Weekly Part have been freely available from 22 January in the Vote Office, which also now has a few copies of the Daily Part for 15 January.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of creating a personal tax allowance at current levels for wives drawing a retirement pension based on their husbands' contributions.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *402*]: If the wife's earned income allowance could be set against a wife's national insurance retirement pension paid on the basis of her husband's contributions, the direct revenue cost would be about £300 million at 1984-85 levels of income, assuming no other change in the income tax rules.

Revenue Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation, including excise and other duties in each of the last six fiscal years revalued at current prices.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: The information is in the table.

*Total yield of taxes, LA rates and national insurance contributions at 1984-85 prices**

	£ billion
1978-79	104
1979-80	111
1980-81	110
1981-82	118·5
1982-83	121·5
1983-84	124·5
†1984-85	128·5

* Using the GDP deflator.
† Estimate.

Per-capita Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what figure per capita of the tax-paying population was represented by the financial contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the years since such contributions commenced.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *212*]: The United Kingdom's contributions (after refunds) per capita of the tax-paying population between the financial years 1973-74 and 1983-84 are as follows:

	£
1973-74	5
1974-75	5
1975-76	9
1976-77	13
1977-78	21
1978-79	30
1979-80	38
1980-81	27
1981-82	30
1982-83	43
1983-84	51

The Community is financed largely from VAT, Customs duties and levies which are borne by consumers. Therefore, the answer is based on United Kingdom population excluding children under 16.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what figure per capita of the tax-paying population was represented by the total grant aid received by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the years since such grants commenced.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *212*]: The United Kingdom's contributions (excluding refunds) per capita of the tax-paying population for the years 1973-74 and 1983-84 are as table:

	£
1973-74	2
1974-75	5
1975-76	8
1976-77	7
1977-78	9
1978-79	13
1979-80	18
1980-81	22
1981-82	25
1982-83	29
1983-84	41

The Community is financed largely from VAT, Customs duties and levies which are borne by consumers. Therefore, the answer is based on United Kingdom population excluding children under 16.

Senior Police Officers (Pensions)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from police committees and federations about the possibility of taxation being imposed on lump sums received by senior police officers upon retirement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *262*]: We have received a small number of representations from police federations on this subject. As these are treated in confidence, I cannot comment on any individual case.

DEFENCE

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make proposals for a "no first use of chemical weapons" pledge to be adopted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No. All members of NATO are already parties to the 1925 Geneva protocol, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons; this prohibition is subject to reservations made by many parties, including the UK. A no first use declaration would be redundant and could undermine the worldwide standing of the 1925 protocol. The NATO Alliance however fully supports, and member states are actively participating in, the efforts of the Geneva conference to negotiate an effective, verifiable and worldwide ban on the production, manufacture and stockpiling, as well as the use, of these weapons.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom policy on chemical and biological weapons of a change in policy by one of the four signatories of the quadripartite agreement on chemical and biological weapons on information and facilities sharing on research development, testing and production of such weapons of a change in policy on the production of nerve gas by another party to the agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to the wide-ranging technical co-operation agreement on research and development which this country has with the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which includes defensive measures against chemical and biological attack. In the event that one of the other parties to the agreement were to change its policy on the production of chemical agents, this would not in itself have implications for the UK's policy on chemical and biological weapons since the agreement addresses only defensive measures. All the countries concerned are signatories to the 1972 biological weapons convention which bans the production, development and stockpiling of biological weapons. On chemical weapons policy, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 10 January, at column 901. The other four Governments likewise attach great importance to a comprehensive, verifiable and worldwide ban on such weapons.

American National Guard

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether those members of the American National Guard on exercise in the United Kingdom in 1984 were members of *(a)* the Air National Guard and *(b)* the Troop National Guard, respectively.

Mr. Lee: Members of both the Air National Guard and Army National Guard took part in exercises in the United Kingdom in 1984.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence which units of the British armed forces the American national guardsmen were working with whilst in the United Kingdom in 1984.

Mr. Lee: United States Army national guardsmen took part in general infantry training exercises with units of the Territorial Army, and US air national guardsmen, practised ground handling of aircraft at RAF Wethersfield and guarding of aircraft at RAF Abingdon.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether American national guards officers were involved in exercises or other activities with his Department's military police or civil police personnel in 1984.

Mr. Lee: United States Air national guardsmen took part in a one day base security exercise at RAF Abingdon, with members of the station's RAF security police.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence what activities American national guardsmen were involved in while in the United Kingdom in 1984.

Mr. Lee: They were involved in routine military training, in order to practise their war roles in support of NATO.

Territorial Army (Centres)

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the Territorial Army centres currently being guarded by Territorial Army personnel were not listed in the answer given to the hon. Member for Ashfield on 15 February, *Official Report*, column *315*; if he will now list the centres as originally requested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No. It is not our practice to comment on detailed security measures taken in response to any particular threat. I cannot therefore say which Territorial Army centres are being guarded by Territorial Army personnel at any given time.

Military Music School

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has initiated or commissioned in the last three years concerning the establishment of a military music training school; what conclusions were reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: A study into musician training in the armed forces was initiated in early 1982. The study was in several stages, one of which involved the employment of an outside consultant. In the light of this work we decided to replace the three single-service schools with one Defence School of Music, to be located at Deal, Kent. This decision was announced in July 1984. We hope that the new school will open in about 1988.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria have governed his decision to locate the new military music centre at Deal in Kent.

Mr. Lee: A number of factors were taken into account in selecting Deal as the future location of the Defence School of Music, including size, time scale, cost and other considerations.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what safety regulations govern the number of nuclear submarines permitted to berth at any one time in the Holy Loch; and whether these have been breached in the last year.

Mr. Heseltine: Safety regulations concerning the use of Holy Loch by the United States Navy govern factors other than the number of nuclear powered submarines which may be present there at any one time. These regulations have satisfied successive Governments. I am informed that there has been no breach of these regulations over the past year.

Royal Ordnance Factory, Euxton

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State fo Defence (1) whether tenders were put out by hi Department to sell surplus boots, uniforms and blanket from royal ordnance factory, Euxton;

(2) how many surplus Army blankets, boots an clothing items from royal ordnance factory, Euxton hav been donated to charities.

Mr. Lee: The items concerned were included in th property passed to Royal Ordnance plc by the schem made under the Ordnance Factories and Military Service Act 1984, a copy of which was laid before the House o 9 January. The company is responsible for its own day-to day operation and I suggest the hon. Member writes to th chairman if he wishes to pursue inquiries about th disposal of these items.

Operation Yealstead

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State fo Defence what were the separate costs of materials an manpower of Operation Yealstead, indicating the Votes t which the expenditure has been charged.

Mr. Lee: It is too soon to be able to give a detailed breakdown of material and manpower costs of the initia operation to clear and fence RAF Molesworth although th initial estimate is about £6·5 million. There will in additio be a general cost arising from Ministry of Defence polic exercises. Costs will thus fall on Votes 1, 2 and 4.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defenc why it is considered necessary to use dummy cruise missil launchers on exercises.

Mr. Stanley: The cruise missile wing at RA Greenham Common has a number of driver training vehicles which simulate the size, shape and weight of th major cruise missile vehicles. These are used on exercise when required by the training programme.

Defence Expenditure (Costing Index)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Defenc what type of costing index his Department uses whe costing long-term defence expenditure such as the Triden project.

Mr. Butler: My Department prepares its long-term costings of expenditure on projects such as Trident a constant prices without making assumptions regarding future inflation. Currently costings are being prepared a forecast average 1984-85 prices.

Low-flying Helicopters

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State fo Defence if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom designated for ultra low flying by military helicopters; and whether consultations have taken place with local authorities over the designation of these areas.

Mr. Lee: No areas of the United Kingdom are specifically designated for ultra low flying by military helicopters.

Contract Cleaners

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what security checks were made on the Clean Industrial Company prior to the award of the contract for the cleaning of his Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 February 1985, c. *629*]: The Ministry of Defence satisfied itself that Cleandustrial Services Ltd. was a company to which contracts for cleaning Ministry of Defence headquarters buildings could appropriately be let.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether officers of the Clean Industrial Company have signed the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 February 1985, c. *629*]: Those officers requiring access to classified information have signed the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what powers he has vested in Clean Industrial to monitor security and vet employees working in his Department's buildings;

(2) what procedures his Department uses for vetting cleaners for security purposes;

(3) if his Department has refused security clearance to any cleaners employed in his Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 February 1985, c. *629*]: The Ministry of Defence is not involved in the recruitment or selection of staff engaged by defence contractors. However, my Department must satisfy itself that employees of cleaning firms are suitable persons to be employed in Ministry of Defence buildings. Occasionally some people are found to be unsuitable. It would be wrong for me to comment publicly on any individual cases. Any representations made to my ministerial colleagues or myself about any particular individual would be considered with the greatest care before any final decisions were taken.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations took place between Clean Industrial and his Department over *(a)* the security vetting and *(b)* the sacking of Mrs. Molly Balkinson.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 February 1985, c. *629*]: I have today written to the hon. Gentleman about Mrs. Molly Balkinson.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 March 1985

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will appoint the present leaders of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham Councils to the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young: The present leader of Newham Council, and the deputy mayor of Tower Hamlets council (who was leader when he was appointed) are both currently members of the board. The former leader of Southwark council was a member of the board until his appointment expired in November 1984. Future appointments are entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's determination as vacancies arise.

London Docklands (Housing)

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes have been provided for sale in London Docklands in each year since 1981; how many are expected to be built in each of the next five years; and how many houses are provided for in the land use plans of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young: The LDDC plans that a total of 10,025 houses for sale will have been started on LDDC owned sites between 1981 and the end of its current planning period in 1988-89. This total can be broken down as follows:

	New starts	*Completions*
1981-82	601	85
1982-83	1,098	348
1983-84	1,449	715
1984-85	1,500	—
1985-86	2,000	—
1986-87	2,000	—
1987-88	982	—
1988-89	425	—
Total	10,025	

Figures for the later years could vary depending upon land availability. In addition, the LDDC estimates that there is the capacity for some 4,000 dwellings to be provided on privately owned sites in their area up to 1988-89. Over 900 have already been started or completed on these sites since 1981.

Inner London Education Authority

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he calculated the fixed rate limits for the coming financial year in respect of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend proposed a precept limit of 74·19p for ILEA on 11 December by reference to the expenditure level determined for it, the block grant payable (nil in the case of ILEA) and taking account of financial reserves available to the authority. In the light of further information provided by the authority he included in the draft order setting precept limits an increased figure of 77·25p. The order was approved by the House of Commons on 6 February and came into operation on 14 February.

Direct Labour Highways Work

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of the direct labour highways work undertaken by the English and Welsh county councils in the financial year 1983-84; and what was the proportion of that work which was won following competitive tender.

Mr. Waldegrave: On the basis of published DLO reports the total value of highways and sewerage work carried out by county councils' direct labour forces in England and Wales was some £490 million of which about 13 per cent. was won in competition. Private sector contractors carried out work valued at some £510 million. Separate figures for highway and sewerage functions are not available.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the results of his discussions with the water authorities on how best to expose their direct labour organisations to competition.

Mr. Gow: Proposals have been put to the water authorities but I cannot say when we will reach conclusions. We are examining wider aspects of water authority privatisation.

Building Regulations (Gas Ingress)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in amending the building regulations to specify measures to prevent the ingress of gas around pipe ducts and cable entries.

Mr. Gow: I do not propose to amend the building regulations to specify such measures. The sealing of entries for services provided by statutory undertakings is covered by other regulations or codes and the British Standards code of practice for drainage, which has been revised to cover this point, will be published shortly. The guidance documents which will accompany the new building regulations to be made later this year will draw attention to the regulations and codes covering the sealing of entry points.

Capital Allocations (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the capital allocations for the city of Leeds for the four main expenditure blocks, education, housing (housing investment programme), social services and the other service blocks for 1985-86 compare, in real terms, with those for 1984-85, 1983-84 and 1982-83; and if he will give the percentage change in value for each block from the previous year.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is as follows:

City of Leeds: Capital Allocations in Real Terms (1983-84 Base Year)*

	1982-83 £000	*1983-84* £000	*per cent. change 1982-83 to 1983-84*	*1984-85* £000	*per cent. change 1983-84 to 1984-85*	*1985-86* £000	*19*
Education	7,498	3,381	−54·9	2,767	−18·2	3,038	
Housing	39,104	29,757	−23·9	27,700	−6·9	22,680	
Personal Social Services	2,786	2,725	−2·2	2,939	+7·9	1,760	
Other Services	15,553	6,050	−61·1	5,297	−12·4	4,220	
Total	64,941	41,913	−35·5	38,703	−7·7	31,698	

* Cash figures adjusted for general inflation to 1983-84 prices as measured by the GDP deflator.

The allocations for 1985-86 will be increased by 5 per cent. across all service blocks if the city of Leeds complies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's request for restraint on capital expenditure in 1984-85.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those borough, district and county councils in England which have passed a resolution on the addition of fluoride to water supplies, indicating against each one whether the decision was in favour or against.

Mr. Macfarlane: Local authorities are not required to inform me about any resolutions they may pass on flouridation. This information is not therefore available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra in relation to the proposed abolition of Merseyside county council.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

After abolition of Merseyside county council the orchestra, along with other major performing arts bodies in the GLC and metropolitan areas, should discuss its needs with the Arts Council, which will receive for this purpose an additional £16 million of central funding in 1986-87—and equivalent sums in subsequent years. The orchestra is well known to the Arts Council, which has made grants to it for many years.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

GCHQ (Resignations)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the 83 staff in scientific and technical grades who resigned from the Government communications headquarters for reasons other than retirement, transfer to another department, maternity or marriage were linguists.

Mr. Rifkind: It would not be appropriate to give details as the question relates to the operations and structure of an intelligence agency.

Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Forei Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has t Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is in breach planning to be in breach of, the anti-ballistic missile and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We believe that parties to al control agreements, including the ABM Treaty of should scrupulously observe their provisions. W therefore concerned about the details of a num possible Soviet contraventions of the treaty mentio President Reagan's report of 21 January to Congres treaty provides a mechanism, the standing consu commission, for discussing such matters and we ho issues can be clarified in this body.

Cambodian Refugees

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreig Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to seek t Thailand in the near future to discuss the probl Cambodian refugees.

Mr. Rifkind: No. But we are in close and fr contact with the Thai authorities on refugee matte my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. expects to discuss the problem of Cambodian re with the United Nations High Commissioner for Re this month.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreig Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose a international conference on the problem of refug south-east asia with particular reference to Camb refugees in Thailand.

Mr. Rifkind: We have no plans to do so, b continue to keep closely in touch with other Govern and with relief organisations about the best mea handling and resolving the distressing problem refugees in south-east Asia.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreig Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has that S troops have used chemical weapons in Afghanistan if he will identify the types and times used and effe known.

Mr. Rifkind: As was stated by my right hon. F the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 27 Ja

1984, and by my noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in another place on 22 November 1984, we believe that some form of non-lethal incapacitating agent has been used by Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Research and analysis continue of the evidence for the use of lethal chemical agents in that country.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has that Vietnamese troops have used chemical weapons in Cambodia; and if he will identify the types and times used and effects if known.

Mr. Rifkind: As a party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons, we view with seriousness any allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Cambodia, as elsewhere. We have been disturbed at recent reports that Vietnamese rockets containing chemical agents have landed in Thai territory. We are studying these reports.

Arms Reduction

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government plan to make to the arms reduction talks in Geneva.

Mr. Rifkind: We shall follow the Geneva talks with great interest and look forward to maintaining the closest contacts with the United States. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently discussed the prospects for the negotiations with President Reagan. My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) hopes to meet the chief United States negotiators when he visits Geneva to address the conference on disarmament on 11 to 12 March. Mr. Gorbachev's visit in December provided an opportunity to exchange views with the Soviet Union.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has that any countries other than the existing five nuclear weapon states either possess, are about to possess or plan to possess nuclear weapons; if he will name the countries concerned; and which of them are signatories to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Rifkind: All the non-nuclear weapon states which are parties to the non-proliferation treaty have undertaken not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons. In 1983 (the last year for which a formal report was issued), as in previous years since the NPT came into force, the IAEA in carrying out its safeguards obligations did not detect any anomally which would indicate the diversion of a significant amount of safeguarded nuclear material for the manufacture of any nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices.

Many other non-nuclear weapon states, not parties to the NPT, which have significant quantities of nuclear material in their territory, have accepted IAEA safeguards on their individual facilities. However, these states have not undertaken to accept IAEA safeguards on all their peaceful nuclear activities as have NPT parties.

The existence in certain of these countries of significant nuclear facilities which are not subject to international inspection must be a cause for concern. Such facilities exist in the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, India, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa. Of these, India detonated a nuclear explosive device in May 1974, although the Indian Government have always said that the explosion was for peaceful purposes only.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government will be making to the non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Rifkind: We will urge the parties to re-affirm the success of the non-proliferation treaty in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and its consequent importance to the security of all states whether or not they are parties. We shall also stress our view that the treaty should be reviewed in a balanced and constructive manner and that it would be strengthened further if membership were universal.

Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate how many British subjects have lost entitlement to pensions accruing from work in other countries because of the unilateral actions of the Governments in those countries in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Renton: We hold no general records of British expatriates who have lost pension entitlements in recent years.

The ODA maintains records of expatriate employees of Commonwealth Governments. In many cases agreements have been concluded with the Governments concerned for ODA to take over and meet outstanding pension liabilities. No record is however maintained of expatriates employed by other foreign Governments or the private sector overseas.

Foreign Affairs Council

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the EEC Foreign Affairs Council of 28 February.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: An extra meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council was held in Brussels on 28 February. I was prevented from attending because of bad weather in Belgium. The United Kingdom therefore was represented by our permanent representative to the European Communities.

The Council continued the discussions begun on 18 and 19 February on the best way to incorporate Spain into Community fishing arrangements on a basis which takes account of the legitimate expectations of the applicant member states while safeguarding the balance of fishing opportunities for existing member states under the common fisheries policy.

There was a further exchange of views about the financing of the 1985 budget. Work on this subject will be pursued by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in preparation for the next meeting of the Council on 17 to 20 March.

The Commission introduced new proposals for integrated Mediterranean programmes. These will be discussed in detail at the March Council.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of any up-to-date statistics which allow a comparison to be made between the United Kingdom's record on energy efficiency and those of its chief industrial and economic competitors.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 28 February at column *227*.

TRANSPORT

Road Maintenance (Privatisation)

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the experimental privatisation of trunk road routine maintenance, as recommended in the Inbucon study of 1982.

Mrs. Chalker: We are still looking at the possibility of contracting out trunk road maintenance as recommended in the Inbucon report and we will shortly be consulting the Association of County Councils on the matter. In addition we are considering the scope for contracting-out maintenance work on lengths of motorway in the metropolitan areas.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for
if he plans any action to assist smaller airlines
at Leeds-Bradford airport; and if he will take ste
to ensure that operators at Leeds-Bradford airpo
excluded from eligibility for any assistance
British Airways to smaller airlines.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I expect that the
liberalisation of domestic licensing will assis
airlines operating from Leeds-Bradford.

There are no specific plans to assist smalle
operating at Leeds-Bradford airport. We hope to
shortly the selection criteria for services meriting
support from British Airways.

Lost Vessels (Inquiries)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for
if he will list all United Kingdom registered ve
at sea in unexplained circumstances in the last fi
what inquiries were set up into their disappear
what was the result of the inquiry in each case.

Mr. David Mitchell [*pursuant to his reply*,
1985, c. *369*]: The following seven vessels—o
ship and six fishing vessels — have been
unexplained circumstances in the five years 198
have been described as "missing" in the Dep
records.

Year	*Missing Vessel*	*Inquiry*	*Result*
1980	MV Derbyshire 91654 grt.	Preliminary Inquiry under Section 464 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894	Cause Unknown
1980	FV Pat Marie 10 m overall length	Preliminary Inquiry under Section 464 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894	Cause Unknown
1981	FV Celerity 19 m overall length	Preliminary Inquiry under Section 464 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894	Cause Unknown
1981	FV Reborn 5 metre overall length	The inquiry took the form of a consideration of the Search and Rescue reports (the body of the sole occupant was recovered)	Cause Unknown
1982	Nil		
1983	FV Zanto 17 metre overall length	Preliminary Inquiry under Section 464 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894	Cause Unknown
1983	FV Exuberant 10 metres overall length	A surveyor's report was obtained on this loss	Cause Unknown
1984	FV South Stack 11 metres overall length	A surveyor's report under Section 728 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894	Cause Unknown

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Population

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the prison population is from ethnic minorities; and what are the figures for each of the main ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the question from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) on 21 January at column *271*.

Chelmsford Prison

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Stat
Home Department how many inmates who were
by his decision to suspend traffic in and out
Majesty's prison Chelmsford resulting from the i
tions into the hazards of acquired immune d
syndrome had completed, or were about to compl
sentences.

Mr. Mellor: None. The discharge of inm
completion of their sentences was not affected.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Stat
Home Department what screening facilities he i

make available to inmates and staff in Her Majesty's prison Chelmsford resulting from the investigations into the outbreak of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Mellor: Staff and inmates have been told that anyone who is concerned that he or she may have been at risk from AIDS should immediately contact either their own doctor or the prison medical officer, as appropriate, for advice on a confidential basis. Wherever necessary, the prison medical officer will refer the case to the local health authority for whatever assistance, including regular health checks, is required.

New inmate receptions at Chelmsford are being asked whether they have AIDS or have been in contact with an AIDS sufferer. Replies which suggest possible contact with AIDS will be thoroughly followed up by the prison medical officer.

Security Firms

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to regulate the operation of security firms in public places and to ban the wearing of uniforms or carrying of weapons by the employees of such firms.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The Government support the steps which have been taken by the British Security Industry Association and the International professional Security Association towards self-regulation. The legal powers of employees of private security firms are no different from other citizens.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what opportunities exist for category A prisoners to acquire skills and knowledge whilst in prison.

Mr. Mellor: The opportunities for category A prisoners to acquire skills and knowledge during their imprisonment are broadly the same as those available to other prisoners. They include tuition in literacy and numeracy in a life and social skills context; in academic education to GCE and other public examination levels, including University degrees; in vocational training; and in recreational activities. Library facilities are also available. Skills and knowledge may also be acquired in workshops and kitchens, and in physical education and the maintenance of grounds and buildings.

Prisoners (Letters)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the restrictions imposed on the numbers of personal letters allowed to be received by any one prisoner and the reasons for any such restrictions.

Mr. Mellor: Restrictions are imposed on the number of letters prisoners may send and receive becaue staff have to be made available to examine and read them. Convicted prisoners are allowed to send each week at least one letter at public expense and one at their own expense. Governors are instructed to allow additional letters as local staff resources permit. Governors also have discretion to grant individual prisoners additional letters in special circumstances; the details are set out in standing order 5, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Convicted prisoners are generally allowed to receive as many letters as they send. There are no limits on the number of letters unconvicted prisoners may send and receive.

Television Licences (Refunds)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider extending the period during which a television licence refund may be obtained from 28 days or less from its date of issue to six months or less from the date of issue.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no present plans to do so.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to designate Leeds-Bradford airport as a port of entry.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Zola Budd

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date Zola Budd's father applied for nationality under the terms of the Immigration Act 1971; and on what date it was granted.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member has misunderstood the position. Mr. Budd had no need to apply for a citizenship he already possessed by descent from his father.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Northern Ireland (Supergrass Evidence)

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Attorney-General how many people charged with offences on the evidence of converted terrorists have been found not guilty by the courts in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: In the years 1983-1985 to date there have been acquittals of 88 persons in trials for terrorist offences where evidence of alleged accomplices formed part of the Crown case. In addition, 14 further persons who had been convicted in such circumstances had their convictions quashed on appeal to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Attorney-General how many people charged with offences on the evidence of converted terrorists have had the charges withdrawn as a result of the evidence being withdrawn.

The Attorney-General: The information is being obtained and I shall reply as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

HMS Conqueror (Log)

Q21. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what progress has been made with inquiries into the disappearance of the navigator's log of HMS Conqueror for a period in May 1982.

The Prime Minister: I cannot at present add to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

Defence gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November 1984, at columns 593-94.

Libya (Scottish Prisoners)

Q22. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Prime Minister what recent representations she has made to the Libyan authorities about the imprisonment of two Scots, Robert Maxwell and Michael King.

The Prime Minister: The British interests section of the Italian embassy in Libya raised Mr. Maxwell's case with the appropriate Libyan authorities at a senior level in September and again in November 1984. A reply is awaited.

I understand that Mr. King's lawyer is making an appeal against his recent sentence. .

The British interests section continues to keep a close and active interest in both cases.

Young Persons (Employment)

Q102. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Prime Minister what priority Her Majesty's Government give to those areas of the United Kingdom, including the parish of Dalton in the Wentworth constituency, where scarcely any young people are in normal employment.

The Prime Minister: In order to promote new employment opportunities in areas such as the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area, in which the hon. Member's constituency lies, these areas have been designated as assisted areas and qualify for regional incentives. Also, assistance is available nationally under the various special employment and training schemes operated by the Department of Employment many of which are particularly designed to assist young people.

Newspapers

Q110. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Prime Minister which newspapers are taken by No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: All the national newspapers and a wide range of regional and local newspapers.

Economic Strategy

Q128. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister what she regards as the main objective of her economic strategy.

The Prime Minister: To reduce inflation and create the conditions for the sustainable growth of output and employment.

Sporting Events (Argentina)

Q129. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Prime Minister if she intends to attempt to dissuade British sportsmen and women from participating in sporting events to be staged on future occasions in Argentina in the same manner in which she made representations to British athletes before the 1980 Olympic Games in which they subsequently took part in Moscow.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Mi will list her official engagements for Tuesda

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister i her official engagements for 5 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. John M. Taylor asked the Prime Mi will list her official engagements for Tuesda

The Prime Minister: This morning I ha with ministerial colleagues and others. In ad duties in the House I shall be having further m today. This evening I hope to have an audi Majesty the Queen.

Civil Service (Code of Conduct)

Sir David Price asked the Prime Minister have discussions with the Civil Service unio establishment of an appropriate code of condu of confidentiality to take the place of secti Official Secrets Act 1911.

The Prime Minister: The question of co was dealt with in paragraph 6 of the note issued by the Head of the Home Civil Ser February annexed to my answer to my hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) date, at columns 130-32. I understand that the Home Civil Service has agreed to meet the C unions for a discussion.

Pensions

Sir David Price asked the Prime Mini Government will consider extending eligibil basic retirement pension with a view to making between men and women and flexible as betwe of 60 and 65.

The Prime Minister: The Government considering the findings of the inquiry into pr retirement conducted by my right hon. Secretary of State for Social Services, which these and other issues. We expect to publish ou in the next few months.

Tax and Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minis the combined total of income tax and nationa contribution a man with a wife and two children per week if his income was £109 per week and rates were £15·60 and £7·35, respectively; compare that with the combined total of chi housing benefit and free school milk to which be entitled; and how much better off he woul and national insurance thresholds were raised t week and all state benefits were eliminated f who earned more than £100 per week.

The Prime Minister: On the basis of the as quoted, and with all other assumptions as in the 1984 DHSS tax-benefit model tables, the com of income tax and national insurance contributi by a married man with gross earnings of £10 would be £24·31.

The combined total of child benefit, housing benefit and value of free school meals paid to such a man with two children aged four and six would be £24·05.

If income tax and national insurance contribution thresholds were raised and state benefits eliminated as outlined, a man in the particular circumstances quoted would be 20p a week better off. The example, however, has no general application: such thresholds and benefit limitations would produce varying gains or losses for people in different circumstances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Aid

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all areas whose eligibility for regional aid from the European Economic Community has changed as a result of his review of regional aid policy.

Mr. Trippier: The new assisted areas map announced on 28 November 1984 is based on the Department of Employment's revised travel-to-work areas introduced in September 1984. The old travel-to-work areas — on which the previous assisted areas map was based—and new travel-to-work areas do not necessarily correspond exactly. It is therefore not possible to define precisely which areas are no longer assisted by reference to the previous assisted areas map.

However, on a "closest approximation" basis the following new travel-to-work areas which were previously assisted under the old map no longer have assisted area status and have therefore ceased to qualify for that aid from the European Community which is dependent upon such status.

England (North-West)
Blackpool
Lancaster and Morecambe
Northwich
Whitehaven

England (North-East)
Alnwick and Amble

England (Yorks and Humberside)
Bridlington and Driffield*
Goole and Selby†
Richmondshire
Scarborough and Filey‡

England (East Midlands)
Louth and Mablethorpe‖
Skegness

England (South-West)
Barnstaple and Ilfracombe
Bideford
Dartmouth and Kingsbridge
Launceston
Newton Abbott
St. Austell
South Molton
Torbay
Torrington
Totnes
Truro

Scotland
Inverness
Islay/Mid Argyll
Oban
Orkney Islands
Shetland Islands
Stirling
Thurso

Wales
Conwy and Colwyn
Denbigh
Monmouth

Notes:
* Bridlington was previously an intermediate area, Driffield was non-assisted.
† Goole was previously an intermediate area, Selby was non assisted.
‡ Scarborough was previously an intermediate area, Filey was non-assisted.
‖ Louth was previously non-assisted, Mablethorpe was in intermediate area.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated annual cost per person in the working population living in the designated areas of providing regional assistance at current levels.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *356*]: The estimated cost of regional development grants and regional selective financial assistance in 1984-85 per head of working population in the assisted areas of Great Britain is £74·78. This estimate is based on the working population of areas designated as assisted prior to the announcement on 28 November 1984 since most expenditure for 1984-85 will be incurred in these areas. Estimates are not readily available on a comparable basis for other types of regional assistance administered by various territorial agencies.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he knows the proportion of the population of each member country of the European Community who live in designated areas; and if any of them exceeds the 35 per cent. maximum figure permitted.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *356*]: I am not aware of any reliable and comparable published data of this type; such information would in any case be misleading, because of wide differences of definition between member states, and because geographical coverage cannot be considered in isolation from other factors such as grant levels and overall expenditure.

The total working population of that part of the United Kingdom in which EC-approved "regional" aids have effect—which includes not only aids given in assisted areas in Great Britain, but also in Northern Ireland, certain inner urban areas and areas administered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Development Board for Rural Wales — amounts to 44·7 per cent. There is no maximum figure such as that referred to by the hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the exact percentage of the working population living in areas that are designated as assisted areas.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, Monday 4 March 1985, c. *356*: The new assisted areas map announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, on 28 November 1984 is estimated to cover 35 per cent. of the working population of Great Britian.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any representations to the European Community asking for some flexibility with the

35 per cent. figure which is the announced European limit to the proportion of the population that can live in designated areas

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *356*]: There is no maximum figure of 35 per cent. for the EC as a whole: the European Commission discusses each member state's proposals for designated areas individually, taking into account many different factors, such as grant levels and overall expenditure. I am not aware of any reliable and comparable published data in respect of other member states: such information would in any case be of limited value because of wide differences of definition between member states, and because geographical coverage cannot be considered in isolation from other factors.

Weighing Machines

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the reply of 8 February to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, *Official Report*, columns *743-44*, he will explain why accommodation and other costs account for 52 per cent. of the hourly charges he makes for type approval of weighing machines; and if he will publish a breakdown of the 31 per cent. figure provided for other costs.

Mr. Fletcher: The breakdown of the "other costs" figure for 1983-84 is as follows:

	per cent.
Departmental overheads (includes personnel management, typing and reprographic services)	13
Administration (includes office management, accounts, local staff management)	9·5
Office supplies (includes stationery, postage, telephones)	4·5
Capital charges, (includes equipment depreciation), materials and consumable stores	4
Total	31

Accommodation costs represent a relatively high proportion of the overall overheads because the national Weights and Measures Laboratory is currently located in central London, an area where high rents and rates prevail.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the uptake of the loan guarantee scheme in Shrewsbury and Atcham.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for Shrewsbury and Atcham are not available. In the West Midlands region 1,398 guarantees have been issued under the loan guarantee scheme.

"Discounts to Retailers"

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet received the report being carried out by the Director General of Fair Trading updating the "Discounts to Retailers" report carried out by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Fletcher: No. The Director General expects to complete his fact-finding exercise later this year, and publish the results.

Radio Spectrum (Review)

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what conclusions he has reached on the recommendations of the Merriman report of the independent review of the radio spectrum, 30-960 MHz.

Mr. Pattie: I am grateful to Dr. Merriman and his colleagues, Air Vice Marshal Foden and Mr. P. M. Vine, for their helpful and constructive report (published in July 1983 as Cmnd. 9000). The Government share the views expressed in it as to the importance of radio regulation to a wide range of industry, service and other users and welcome the many recommendations it contains which are directed towards ensuring that this task is more effectively discharged. In the 18 months since the report was submitted, the recommendations have been studied in detail and several have already been put into effect.

A number of the recommendations concerned the optimum location within the machinery of government for the regulation of radio: these have been overtaken by the transfer of the radio regulatory division to my Department in June 1983. With the exceptions noted in the following paragraphs 2 and 9, the Government accept all the other recommendations in the report and the action they are taking is as follows. (References are to the relevant paragraph numbers in the report.)

1. Exceptional steps are being taken to overcome current difficulties in recruiting the specialist staff needed to carry out RRD's work in the way envisaged in the report. In particular, it has now been agreed that an allowance will be paid to radio spectrum engineers to assist in the recruitment, selection and retention of qualified staff. The staff complement has been increased to allow for more monitoring of the spectrum (9.30), and as staff levels increase, more effort will be devoted to planning for broadcasting ancillary and fixed services (4.12 and 4.25) and to involvement in research into systems and propagation (12.7). Staff exchanges with industry will be introduced when staffing levels permit (12.12).

2. The existing structure of consultative bodies on radio regulatory matters will be reviewed and if necessary strengthened or extended; in the light of that review further consideration will be given to whether there is a case for establishing a small high-level expert body as recommended in the report (9.14).

3. Regular reviews, on a user group basis, of spectrum usage and technical developments will be instituted (9.8). A forward planning unit has been set up in recognition of the long time scales involved in bringing about major changes in the pattern of use (4.28).

4. The allocation of spectrum for defence purposes will be reviewed periodically by an independent committee, reporting jointly to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Defence and for Trade and Industry (9.19). The members of the committee who will be asked to carry out the first review will be appointed later this year.

5. A study is being commissioned of the feasibility of the management of spectrum via the price mechanism (11.16)

6. Economic expertise is already being applied to frequency management questions and the possible use of cost benefit analysis or similar techniques will be explored (9.23). Some steps have already been taken to adjust licence fees in support of frequency management objectives, and further adjustments will be made (9.27).

7. The frequency allocation table for the UK will be published later this year (9.10). Effort will be devoted to improving the quantity and quality of other published material which might be of value to users of radio and, staff levels permitting, it is hoped to publish annual reports on the work of RRD beginning the financial year 1985-86 (9.6 and 9.9).

8. Frequency assignment responsibility will continue to be delegated to common interest groups of users where this is compatible with the efficient and interference free use of the spectrum. The scope for it may, however, in practice be limited. In bands where the responsibility for assignment remains with the

Government, it is hoped that common interest user groups can, by excercising a degree of self-regulation, play a useful role in achieving fuller and more equitable use of the spectrum (10.13).

9. In newly available land mobile bands particularly, preference will be given to the establishment of new service providing systems (for example trunked common base stations) (10.17). Where appropriate, fixed time limits will be set to frequency assignments (10.23); but I am not convinced that provisional assignments (10.26) are necessary, the need identified in the report being already met by existing procedures.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in textiles and clothing and the overall trade balance in manufactures with Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Macao in 1979 to 1984;

(2) what was the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in textiles and clothing and the overall trade balance in manufacturers with the Association of South East Asian Nation countries in the years 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *116*]: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom crude trade trade balance

Value £ million

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Hong Kong						
Textiles and clothing	−323	−322	−365	−362	−367	−467
Manufactures	−271	−216	−281	−174	−275	−413
Taiwan						
Textiles and clothing	−33	−34	−44	−55	−60	−65
Manufactures	−115	−137	−202	−209	−337	−443
South Korea						
Textiles and clothing	−94	−86	−137	−133	−171	−146
Manufactures	−116	−134	−165	−147	−270	−226
Macao						
Textiles and clothing	−12	−15	−19	−18	−18	−25
Manufactures	−12	−15	−20	−17	−23	−40
Association of South East Asian Nations						
Textiles and clothing	−34	−36	−50	−63	−52	−58
Manufactures	+375	+474	+421	+552	+529	+360

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 sections 5 to 8 for manufactures; and for textiles and clothing SITC/R2 divisions 65 and 84 (less group 848), groups 266 and 267 and sub-group 268.7 (part) in the *UK Overseas Trade Statistics*.
Notes: Crude balance is calculated as UK exports (fob) less UK imports (cif).
*Provisional.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) by how much imports of Portuguese knickers, pants and briefs, MIFA category 13, exceeded the permitted quota in the period 1 October to 31 December 1984; and what action he proposes to take as a result;

(2) if the voluntary restraint arrangement to curtail the importation of Portuguese knickers, pants and briefs, MFA category 13, to 1·6 million pairs in the period from 1 October to 31 December 1984 was observed.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 March 1985, c. *321*]: There are no formal quota arrangements on textile and clothing trade with Portugal. There is a voluntary restraint arrangement, but this does not cover category 13. Portugal did, however, give informal assurances about its exports of certain products, including MFA category 13, for the last quarter of 1984. Import figures for this period for category 13 show imports of 5,103,000 pieces. This level of imports has caused serious concern. I have written on this matter to the Portuguese authorities and I have raised it personally with the European Commission which is to hold early discussions with Portuguese officials.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the bursaries which have been allocated to the Agricultural and Food Research Council in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The Agricultural and Food Research Council receives about half its funds by way of grant-in-aid from the Department and half by way of payment from the Agriculture Departments for commissioned research. The council does not receive bursaries from either source, or from any other.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many redundancies and institute closures have arisen within the Agricultural and Food Research Council in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of compulsory redundancies since 1979 are as follows:

Financial Years	*Total*
1979-80	0
1980-81	0
1981-82	0
1982-83	4
1983-84	34

Financial Years	Total
1984-85	*91
	*129

* Estimated

The total number of voluntary premature retirements (including voluntary redundancies) during the same period is estimated to be 333.

One institute, the Letcombe laboratory, is due to be closed on 31 March 1985; though as from 1 April 1985 the National Institute for Research in Dairying will become the Food Research Institute, Reading, and the Grassland Research Institute, Maidenhead, will be reconstituted as the Animal and Grassland Research Institute (including elements of NIRD's existing work.)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the budget of the Agricultural and Food Research Council during the next three years.

Mr. Brooke: The Agricultural and Food Research Council's grant-in-aid for 1985-86 from the Department, as already announced by my right hon. Friend on 10 January 1985, at column 526, is £50·3 million, including £4·8 million for restructuring. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils has provisionally recommended that the council should receive £49·7 million in 1986-87 (including £3 million for restructuring) and £47·5 million in 1987-88. Final advice on the 1986-87 allocation will be given by the ABRC in late 1985, and for 1987-88 a year later. The balance of the council's annual income is made up of payments for commissioned work, mainly from the Agriculture Departments; the amount of this balance thus depends on the amount of such work, as agreed between the council and the Agriculture Departments.

Open University

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the present rôle of his visiting committee in relation to the Open University; if he has any plans to change the composition or functions of the committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Open University visiting committee's terms of reference are:

"To visit the Open University from time to time to discuss its work and resource needs and, in the light of the Committee's enquiries and of the Government's policies for higher and continuing education, to advise the Secretary of State on the developments proposed by the University and their financial implications; and to consider and advise on questions about the University which may be referred to the Committee by the Secretary of State or on which it may wish to offer advice."

Committee membership is initially for three years. The terms of office of the present members expire this year and consideration will be given to the reconstitution of the committee. There are no plans to change its functions.

Universities (Medical Research)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to monitor the effect of the amended limited list of prescribable drugs on pharmaceutical industry-sponsored research in universities.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Commonwealth Day

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responses he has had in reply to the posters and leaflets sent to all chief education officers for distribution to schools about celebrating Commonwealth day on 11 March.

Mr. Brooke: The Department's letter to chief education officers did not seek a specific response, but 10 local education authorities have approached the Department with requests for additional copies of the Commonwealth day poster and leaflet.

Careers Advisory Service

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will have discussions with representatives of the National Foundation for Educational Research about their work carried out on demands imposed on further education careers advisers.

Mr. Brooke: No. Careers education and guidance for students in further education, whether through the college itself or the careers service, is provided by the local education authorities, to whose attention I commend the report of the recent NFER study.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he intends to make available for improving audio-visual and video equipment facilities of further and higher education careers advisory services.

Mr. Brooke: The funding of equipment purchases for maintained colleges of further and higher education is the responsibility of the local education authority concerned. The importance the Government attach to the updating and improvement of information and guidance services in colleges is demonstrated by our decision to fund the development of a comprehensive computer-aided careers guidance system for students and by our support for the educational counselling and credit transfer information service.

Electronic Calculators

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he will issue to local education authorities in respect of the use of electronic calculators by pupils in primary schools both in classroom and examination conditions.

Mr. Dunn: The Cockcroft report pointed to some of the changes that the advent of calculators would bring about in the primary mathematics curriculum; the Department has distributed 100,000 copies of a guide to the report for primary schools, drawing attention to this and other matters. The school curriculum development committee is supporting a pilot project on the mathematics curriculum from six to 13, which is investigating these changes in greater detail.

British Youth Council

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds his Department gives

to the British Youth Council; for what purposes; and what funds his Department gives to other voluntary organisations connected with youth.

Mr. Brooke: The grants made by the Department to the British Youth Council are provided for educational purposes. The 1984-85 grant allocation is £107,750. Grants to other voluntary youth organisations are expected to amount to some £3·5 million in 1984-85.

International Youth Year

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds his Department has spent and intends to spend on International Youth Year; and to which organisations connected with International Youth Year his Department has given funds.

Mr. Brooke: Grant-aid to the International Youth Year national co-ordinating committee for England, to the end of this financial year, is expected to amount to £134,850; that for 1985-86 has still to be announced. Grants have been approved for International Youth Year projects undertaken by:

National Council for Voluntary Youth Sevices.
British Youth Council.
British Council of Churches.
Operation Raleigh.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when Her Majesty's Inspectorate last visited Warwickshire; what its findings were; and when it is intended that it next visits Warwickshire.

Sir Keith Joseph: The last formal inspection of a school in Warwickshire by Her Majesty's inspectors was of Henley-in-Arden high school in October 1983, the report of which was published in September 1984. Her Majesty's inspectors have continued to visit schools and colleges in Warwickshire since then, some as part of national surveys which have led to published reports. There will be further formal inspections of individual schools and colleges in Warwickshire as necessary as part of Her Majesty's Inspectorate's national programme.

Language Teaching

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to make available resources for the promotion of language teaching in secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The level of resources for the provision of language teaching in schools is a matter for local education authorities and schools themselves to determine.

Food Content Labelling

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he intends to issue to local education authorities in respect of fat and sugar quantities contained in food offered by cafeteria counter services to pupils of primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: None. The responsibility for the nutritional standards of school meals lies with the LEAs.

Research (Budgetary Allocations)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Advisory Board for Research Councils in respect of research spending budgetary allocations.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend received advice on this from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on 30 November 1984 in the form of a report subsequently published under the title "Scientific Opportunities and the Science Budget 1984". Further advice was received by my right hon. Friend on 20 December 1984 and published in January 1985 as "Further Advice on the Science Budget 1984". Copies of both reports have been placed in the Library.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average annual cost to his Department of an assisted places secondary school place; and how this compares with the average annual capitation for a maintained sector secondary school place.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *378*]: The estimated average cost of an assisted place in the school year 1984-85 is £1,469. A weighted average of the agreed 1984-85 inter-authority recoupment rates for the same mix of pupils is £1,230.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the proposed closures of grammar schools which have been refused by his Department since 1979, in each case stating the local education authority and year of decision.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *378*]: The following table lists proposals to cease to maintain grammar schools which my right hon. Friend or his predecessor have rejected since May 1979.

List of Grammar Schools
(Proposed closures rejected by Secretary of State)

Date	*LEA*	*Name of Grammar school*
18 February 1980	Kirklees	Batley Grammar for Girls
9 February 1981	Birmingham	Bishop Vesey's Grammar School
5 August 1982	Shropshire	Newport Girls' Grammar
2 December 1982	Cumbria	Heversham Grammar
20 January 1983	Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton Girls' Grammar
16 February 1983	Gloucestershire	Marling School
		Stroud Girls' School
21 April 1983	Wiltshire	Bishop Wordsworth Boys' Grammar
		South Wiltshire Girls' Grammar
10 May 1983	Cumbria	Whitehaven Grammar School
		Workington Grammar School
14 July 1983	Gloucestershire	Pate's Grammar
		Cheltenham Grammar
10 August 1983	Lancashire	Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar
14 November 1983	Calderdale	The Heath School
		The Highlands School
		The Princess Mary School
		The Crossley and Porter School
22 February 1984	Gloucestershire	Colwell School for Girls
		Denmark Road
		Ribston Hall High School
		Crypt Grammar School
		Sir Thomas Rich's School

SCOTLAND

British Youth Council (Scotland)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds his Department gives to the British Youth Council (Scotland); for what purposes; and what funds his Department gives to other youth organisations, including those connected with International Youth Year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Levels of grant for 1985-86 have not yet been decided. For 1984-85 recurrent grant amounting to £18,504 was paid under the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959-79 towards the administration costs incurred by the British Youth Council (Scotland). For the same period, my Department paid a total of £467,126 recurrent grant under these regulations to other voluntary youth organsiations. Grants given to the International Youth Year Scottish Co-ordinating Committee since 1 April 1983 amount to £39,794. It is expected that all youth organisations will promote International Youth Year.

Illegitimacy

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in implementing the proposals of the Law Commission on illegitimacy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 6 June 1984 at column 193.

Montgomery Committee Report

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his consideration of the recommendations of the Montgomery committee report on the powers and functions of Island councils, with particular regard to the effects the recommendations may have on the incidence of expenditure on police forces in other local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend hopes shortly to announce his conclusions on the recommendations of the committee of inquiry, chaired by Sir David Montgomery, into the functions and powers of the Islands councils of Scotland. The recommendations on the arrangements for financing the Northern joint police committee's expenditure are of direct concern only to the three Islands councils and Highland regional council; whether there will be any implications for other police authorities can be considered only when final decisions on the recommendations have been taken.

Tenants (Repairs)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish draft regulations under section 17A of the Tenants' Rights Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 giving details of the scheme to give tenants the right to carry out repairs; when he anticipates the scheme will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Draft regulations were issued to interested organisations for comment on 9 November 1984. The closing date for comments was 31 December 1984. My Department is at present assessing the representations received and I envisage that final regulations will be laid before Parliament once this process has been completed with a view to implementation later in the year.

Building Regulations

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to commission an independent report to inquire into the consequences of proposed changes in building regulations prior to any legislation to implement these changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No. Adequate procedures are laid down by statute for consultation with the Building Standards Advisory Committee and with other interested bodies on proposed building standards regulations, and all regulations are subject to parliamentary approval.

Fishing Industry

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total weight and value of landings of both white fish and shellfish at those fishing ports situated in the maritime areas covered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board, for each of the last five years; and what proportion of the total Scottish catch those landings represent.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

*Landings by United Kingdom vessels in HIDB area**

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*†1984*
Weight (tonnes)					
Demersal	62,250	87,240	103,135	95,594	103,314
Pelagic	101,192	131,486	157,918	157,607	202,354
Shellfish	15,306	17,443	18,083	18,396	20,943
Percentage of total landings in Scotland					
Demersal	28	34	35	33	37
Pelagic	84	86	92	91	90
Shellfish	56	58	62	56	61
Value (£ thousand)					
Demersal	13,342	15,003	18,256	22,124	30,983
Pelagic	8,154	13,302	16,688	17,780	21,404
Shellfish	12,505	13,786	16,084	17,678	22,201
Percentage of total landings in Scotland					
Demersal	16	17	18	19	23
Pelagic	82	86	90	89	88
Shellfish	65	65	68	61	67

* The HIDB area figures relate to the sea fisheries districts Wick, Orkney, Shetland, Ullapool, Stornoway, Mallaig, Oban and Campbeltown.

† Provisional.

Prisons

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to eliminate overcrowding in Scottish prisons.

Mr. Ancram: The present overcrowding in the Scottish penal system mainly affects Edinburgh and Barlinnie prisons and Longriggend remand institution. An increase in the adult population, particularly remand prisoners, has created an imbalance in the system and action taken to remedy this includes redesignating a young offenders institution for adults and transferring some under

21 remands from Edinburgh prison to Polmont young offenders institution. In the longer term, the reopening early in 1986 of Greenock prison following redevelopment and the completion early in 1987 of phase II of Shotts prison should virtually eliminate overcrowding, provided that the inmate population does not increase significantly beyond the present level.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on prison building for each year since 1974 giving figures to date; and what will be the total bill for the cost of repairing Peterhead prison.

Mr. Ancram: Capital expenditure on prison building in Scotland since 1974 is as follows:

	£ million
1974-75	3·379
1975-76	3·600
1976-77	6·559
1977-78	1·696
1978-79	1·737
1979-80	1·507
1980-81	2·880
1981-82	3·891
1982-83	4·373
1983-84	5·458
1984-85	*8·535

* Estimate

Expenditure on refurbishing Peterhead prison amounts to some £1·4 million. This includes £500,000 for the new 10-cell unit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when Shotts prison building will be completed and for how many places.

Mr. Ancram: The phase II development of Shotts prison is programmed for completion early in 1987 and will provide 468 inmate places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what future spending on Scottish prisons has been planned by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I refer my hon. Friend to pages 76 and 80-82 of "Public Expenditure to 1987-88: a Commentary on the Scotland Programme." The main project after Shotts prison phase II will be the new maximum security prison at Peterhead, work on which is programmed to begin in 1987 and to be completed in 1990 at an estimated cost of £12·3 million.

Remand Prisoners

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of remand prisoners in Scottish prisons during each month over the last 12 months.

Mr. Ancram: The numbers of remand prisoners held in Scottish penal establishments on the first Tuesday in each of the past 12 months are as follows:

	Male	*Female*
1984		
March	890	48
April	910	41
May	821	51
June	935	52
July	860	49
August	822	49
September	958	58
October	1,025	50
November	1,041	73
December	1,048	63
1985		
January	837	56
February	1,041	56

Fine Defaulters

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fine defaulters are now in prison in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The latest information available is for December 1984. During that month, the average daily number of persons detained in default of payment of a fine in Scottish penal establishments was 248.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

2. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has considered the report of the Commission for Racial Equality on "Racial Equality and the Youth Training Scheme"; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. I understand that the Manpower Services Commission is drawing upon the recommendations made in the report to develop a package of measures aimed at ensuring that its policy of equal opportunities is fully implemented.

15. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I frequently discuss the youth training scheme with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, and I plan to do so next on 11 March.

20. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the training opportunities provided for young women on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. The full range of training opportunities within the youth training scheme is open equally to young women and young men.

24. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers of vacant places on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at the end of January, some 382,000 youth training scheme places had been approved in the current financial year, while there were around 293,000 young people in training. It is not possible to give a precise figure of vacant places mainly because not all approved places will actually be available for occupation.

37. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will identify those areas of the country where there are more offers of training places than there are youth training scheme trainees coming forward to fill them; if he is satisfied with the publicity given to the youth training scheme in those areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission must provide enough youth training scheme places to cater for eligible young people and to meet the Government's undertaking to unemployed minimum age school leavers of an offer of a suitable place on the scheme by Christmas. Inevitably this means that in all areas a number of training places will exist that are not filled.

I am satisfied with the publicity given to the youth training scheme which has helped to attract more than 360,000 entrants to the scheme between April 1984 and January 1985 and over 370,000 entrants during the previous financial year.

41. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the take-up of places on the youth training scheme in Berkshire.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. By the end of January more than 3,000 young people had entered the youth training scheme in Berkshire. I am pleased to say that our undertaking to all unemployed minimum age school leavers of an offer of a place on the scheme by Christmas was once again effectively met in the county in 1984.

73. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the availability of statistics on accidents on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will continue to make statistics on accidents to trainees on the youth training scheme available to this House. Statistics are also made available to area manpower boards. Accident statistics for the youth training scheme are normally prepared by the Manpower Services Commission on a quarterly basis for each of the 55 training division administrative areas and they are classified into fatalities, major injuries (as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980) and minor injuries. The Manpower Services Commission's figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed in the normal way.

78. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State Employment what is his latest estimate of the propor of youth training scheme leavers who have got jobs.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information is now avail from the first of a series of regular monthly survey young people who leave the youth training scheme. was carried out during December 1984 and January and covered a national sample of 15 per cent. of yo people who left the scheme in June 1984. The results sh that 56 per cent. of those young people responding w in jobs at the time of the survey. A further 2 per cent. w on a full-time education or training course and 4 per c were on another youth training scheme.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of S for Employment if he will make a statement on effectiveness of the youth training scheme in the w midlands.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The youth training scheme proved very successful in the second year in the w midlands, with school leavers clearly recognising advantages and opportunities which a high quality traini scheme can offer. I am further encouraged both by higher number of entrants to schemes so far this year a the wider range of places being made available in the ar

Mr. Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State Employment if he will take steps to resolve the proble created by wages councils instructing certain employers pay their young workers higher wages than the maximu level laid down by his Department for purposes of you training scheme grant.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Most employers affected wages council decisions are able to take part in the you workers scheme, although, regrettably, some cannot. W are bearing this problem in mind in our continuing scrutin of the operation and effects of the wages councils syste

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State f Employment if he will publish for each available quart since the inception of the youth training scheme th incidence rate of major and fatal accidents to trainees.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 February 1985, c. *18-19*]: The following table sets out th quarterly incidence rates per 100,000 trainees on the yout training scheme, separately for major and fatal accidents for the periods requested, calculated on the basis of th average number of trainees in training.

Period	*Average numbers in training*	*Accidents**		*Quarterly incidence rate per 100,000 trainees†*	
		Fatalities	*Major injuries‡*	*Fatalities*	*Major injurie*
1 April to 30 June 83	20,169	1	1	5·0	5·
1 July to 30 September 83	122,344	1	8	0·8	6·
1 October to 31 December 83	253,203	1	44	0·4	17·
1 January to 31 March 84	250,119	1	47	0·4	18·
1 April to 30 June 84	241,966	0	38	0·0	15·
1 July to 30 September 84	295,226	3	50	1·0	16·
1 October to 31 December 84	309,918	0	55	0·0	17·

* The Manpower Services Commission's accident figures for the youth training scheme are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the Commission's figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed (3 of the fatal accidents would not have been reportable). Accident incidence rates for the youth training scheme

will therefore overstate the true position in comparison with figures for the employed populations generally.
† The quarterly incidence rates quoted in the table should be interpreted with caution because they may not be as meaningful as annual rates.
‡ Major injuries are classified according to severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980.

Skillcentres

17. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the proposed closure of skillcentres.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since my right hon. Friend's statement in the House on 29 November about the skillcentre proposals made to the Manpower Services Commission by the skillcentre training agency, my right hon. Friend and I have received some 190 letters on the subject and met seven delegations.

32. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received about the proposed closure of the Southampton skillcentre annex.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My hon. Friend has been to see me about the position in Southampton and I am to have further discussions with him and representatives of the Southampton chamber of commerce next week. Since the skillcentre training agency's proposals were announced on 28 November, my right hon. Friend and I have received around 11 letters on the proposed closure of the Southampton skillcentre annexe and in addition several hon. Members have put questions. I know that the commission chairman has also received a number of letters on the subject and that meetings have been held between his officials and Southampton city council, Hampshire county council, and the Hampshire Development Association.

63. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the skillcentres.

76. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of skillcentres.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Members to the statement my right hon. Friend made to the House on 21 February at column 1234.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Employment if in view of the representations which he has received, he will agree to maintain and sustain the Southampton skillcentre and its annexe.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The skillcentre training agency's plan, accepted by the Manpower Services Commission, is based upon its judgment of what represents the best way forward for the skillcentre network as a whole. It proposes to retain Southampton skillcentre, but close its annexe.

My right hon. Friend believed it right to accept the Commission's professional judgment on the shape of the network but has particularly asked the chairman to make quite sure in implementing the plan that no individual closure takes place before satisfactory alernative provisions have been identified.

I will, of course, pass on the points made by my hon. Friend about the Southampton skillcentre annexe to the chairman of the commission.

Ethnic Monitoring

18. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on proposals for ethnic monitoring in unemployment benefit offices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Arrangements to collect statistics on ethnic minority unemployment remain under active consideration and my right hon. Friend will make a statement in due course.

Early Retirement

19. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to increase the opportunity for early retirement for the over-60s.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend announced in the House on 12 November 1984 that the full-time job release scheme, due to end on 31 March 1985, would continue until 31 March 1986, and that we would be revising the present part-time job release scheme to make it more attractive to both employers and employees.

Community Programme

21. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations regarding recent rule changes to the community programme.

29. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received concerning the rule change on the community programme affecting the eligibility of women to participate in that scheme.

35. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the rules for eligibility to the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During the seven months since my right hon. Friend announced the changes to the community programme, on 30 July 1984, we have received some 400 letters. I have also met Lady Platt, chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

51. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the progress of the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The community programme continues to make excellent progress. At the end of January some 131,000 people were taking part.

Labour Statistics

22. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,341,000, which represents an unemployment rate of 13·9 per cent. We are gravely concerned about the level of unemployment indicated by these figures, and we are

this year spending around £2 billion on employment and training measures. However, sustainable employment depends on a healthy economy, competitive industry and a more flexible labour market, and our policies are directed to those ends.

23. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of unemployed; and what proportion of these are under 25 years of age.

55. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of unemployed; and what proportion are under 25 years of age.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,340,958. Of these 38·5 per cent. were under 25 years of age.

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people under the age of 21 years are unemployed; and what percentage this is of the total number unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom under 20 years of age was 571,664, which was 17·1 per cent. of the total. The available analysis by age does not separate those under 21.

38. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers of people unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the 10 January 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,340,958.

40. **Mr. Maginnis** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what region of the United Kingdom has the highest rate of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland was 21·3 per cent., which is higher than for all other regions of the United Kingdom.

45. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under 25 years of age are currently unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the United Kingdom was 1,286,183.

54. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the numbers of people in the United Kingdom who will be seeking employment in each of the next three years; and how these figures compare with the current number.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department does not make forecasts of the number of people seeking employment.

Mr. James Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed for over 12 months at the most recent date; and how many are over 50 years of age.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the number of claimants who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,316,017. Of these, 318,213 were over 50 years of age.

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of Stat Employment how many people have been unemploy over one year, two years, and three years, respectiv the most recent available date.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of Sta Employment how many people have been unemploy over 12 months and over two years at the latest ava date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, the num claimants in the United Kingdom who had unemployed for over one year was 1,316,017. Of 761,409 had been unemployed for over two year 454,154 for over three years.

75. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of for Employment what percentage of the registered in population, male and female, are in part employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not availal the precise form requested. Information about the nu of employees, male and female, in full-time and part employment can be provided but only for those dates censuses of employment are taken. Censuse employment have been taken triennially since 197 the latest results are for September 1981. At that there were 21,314 million employees in employme Great Britain with 21 per cent. working part-time. were 12,229 million male workers and 9,085 m female workers with 5·9 per cent. of the males and per cent. of the females working part-time.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State Employment how much of the increase in employme 1984 was in full-time jobs; and how many married wo returned to work in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between September 1983 September 1984 the employed labour force is estimat have increased by 342,000. Within this total the nu of women in part-time work increased by 207,000, wo in full-time work by 54,000, and men by 81,000. Num of men in part-time work are available only for censu employment dates. It is estimated that the numbe married women in work increased by about 175,000

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State Employment if he will make a statement on the l unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Bootle (Roberts) earlier today.

Job Release Scheme

25. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State Employment whether he will make a statement on future of the job release scheme.

26. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State Employment whether he has any plans to expand the release scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: As my right hon. Friend announ to the House on 12 November 1984 at column 444, present full time job release scheme will continue, with change in the eligible age groups until 31 March 1986. part-time job release scheme will similarly operate unti

March 1986, also with no change in the eligibility age groups, but it is being revised to make it more attractive to both employers and employees. Details will be announced in the very near future.

Small Businesses

27. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to modify the application of the Sex Discrimination Act and Race Relations Act to small businesses.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are currently reviewing the legislative burden on small firms and will be making announcements on their conclusions in due course.

48. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people in work in the private sector are employed in small businesses in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and West Germany.

Mr. Alan Clark; No recent figures are available but estimates relating to 1976 suggest that just over one-third of private sector employment in the United Kingdom is in small businesses. Because of differences in the sources, definitions and time periods covered by the available statistics for other countries it is impossible to make valid international comparisons of the proportion of employment in the private sector which is in small businesses.

Factory Inspectors

28. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has had any discussions with the Health and Safety Executive about increasing the number of factory inspectors in post.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend and I meet the director-general of the executive and his colleagues from time to time to discuss many aspects of the work of the executive. The staffing of the executive and measures to improve the efficient use of staff have been topics covered by such discussions.

69. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to discuss with the Manpower Services Commission increasing the number of factory inspectors.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Manpower Services Commission has no responsibilities for the staffing of the Factory Inspectorate.

Merseyside and Liverpool

31. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in the county of Merseyside and in the city of Liverpool since his appointment as Secretary of State.

Mr. Alan Clark: I regret that this information is not available. Information on job losses is not collected. Net changes in employment can be supplied but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are conducted. Censuses of employment have been taken triennially since 1978. Results of the current, September 1984, census of employment are scheduled to become available towards the end of this year.

Amble

33. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment in the Amble employment exchange area at the most recent available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Information Technology

34. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the numbers of skilled staff available to employers in information technology and allied fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government's strategy is directed towards encouraging industry to assume its proper responsibilities for identifying and meeting its manpower requirements. Our support for employers' training efforts will be focussed on those skills in real demand, particularly in information and other new technologies. Recommendations for action are set out in two reports so far issued by the information technology skills shortages committee.

Job Creation

36. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to create permanent jobs for the long-term unemployed as an alternative to increasing the number of temporary places on Manpower Services Commission special measures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our employment and training measures are one element in the Government's policies to achieve sustained economic growth. It is only through such growth that more permanent jobs for unemployed people will be created.

57. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consider providing funds to the public services and voluntary organisations to create permanent jobs as an alternative to expanding Manpower Services Commission special measures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We already review regularly our employment and training measures in order to ensure their objectives continue to justify the use of taxpayers' money and could not be achieved more cost-effectively by alternative uses of that money.

Liverpool

39. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for employment how many under 25-year-olds are unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985 the number of unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in the old Liverpool travel-to-work area was 38,626. Corresponding information for the new travel-to-work areas become available later this year.

Employment Protection

42. **Mr. Ryman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to reduce employees' rights by seeking to amend employment protection legislation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The employment protection legislation is kept under constant review. Parliament will be informed of any plans to amend it.

Young Persons (Training)

43. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people under the age of 25 years currently receive some type of approved training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information on all those who receive recognised training is not collected. However, it is estimated that there are currently about 310,000 young people under the age of 25 years on training schemes funded by the Manpower Services Commission.

Special Employment Measures

44. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has considered the proposals sent to him by the Association of Directors of Social Services that he should expand his special employment measures by the establishment of supplementary employment grant to allow for the employment of additional staff to care for the elderly, the sick, the physically and mentally handicapped, the mentally ill and other needy groups.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend, together with a number of other Ministers, received a copy of the Association of Directors of Social Services' letter of 14 January to the Prime Minister. We consider very carefully all suggestions to help unemployed people including whether they appear to offer a more cost-effective use of taxpayers' money than our existing employment measures.

Trade Unions (Reform)

46. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans for further legislation to reform the trade unions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Trade Union Act 1984, designed to ensure that trade unions are more democratic and their leaders more accountable to their members, will not come fully into effect until later this year. It is too early to say what further specific legislative measures may be needed.

Schoolchildren

47. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many convictions there were in the years 1980 to 1984 for illegal employment of schoolchildren.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The responsibility for the enforcement of legislation relating to the restrictions on employment of children in "industrial undertakings" (such as factories, construction sites, mines and quarries and so on) and agriculture falls to the Health and Safety Executive. The number of convictions obtained by HSE Inspectors for child employment offences in these undertakings is as follows:

	Convictions
1980	18
1981	5
1982	10
1983	*8
1984	*1

* Provisional.

Basildon

49. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of Employment how many long-term unemployed in Basildon; and what plans he has to all situation.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 January 1985, a tot claimants had been unemployed for over one Basildon jobcentre area. Their immediate pr employment can be improved by participation our employment and training measures. But th term prospects depend upon sustainable growth and jobs, which is the objective of our economi

GCHQ

50. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of Employment if he will make a statement on communication from the International Organisation about the status of Government co tions headquarters's employees at Cheltenham.

Mr. Tom King: I understand that the Gov letter of 4 January to the International Labour Or about GCHQ has been considered by the com freedom of association and is now to be conside committee of experts on the applications of co and recommendations.

Enterprise Allowance

52. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of Employment what percentage of those who re enterprise allowance are no longer trading 18 mo start up.

Mr. Alan Clark: About 30 per cent.

MSC Special Programmes

53. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of Employment whether he will meet representativ voluntary sector to discuss the operation of M Services Commission special programmes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government reco important contribution the voluntary sector mak success of a number of the measures operate Manpower Services Commission. I have had r requests for a meeting but I would certainly seeing representatives of the voluntary sector wished to discuss any particular issues.

Accident Reports

56. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Secretary of Employment what arrangements exist for re accidents to be made by employers to the He Safety Executive other than fatal accidents, injuries and dangerous occurrences as define Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occ Regulations

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no formal arrangements for the reporting of accidents by employers direct to the Health and Safety Executive other than those made by the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Employment and Wages

58. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received from the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry on the relationship between employment and wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have not recently received representations from either the Confederation of British Industry or the Trades Union Congress. My right hon. Friend presented a summary of the evidence in a paper to the National Economic Development Council on 6 February. This paper is now published and available from the National Economic Development Office.

Engineers

59. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to encourage an increase in the number of qualified engineers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Securing an adequate supply of people, including qualified engineers, with up-to-date skills to meet the demands of new technology is one of the main objectives of the Government's adult training strategy. However, employers have the major responsibility for investing in the training of the people they require. The Government's financial support for adult training will concentrate increasingly on the Manpower Services Commission's pump-priming role and gives priority to those subjects related to new technology, including engineering.

Wages Inspectors

60. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors are currently in post.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are 118 wages inspectors in post. Two vacant posts are in the process of being filled.

Jobs (National Insurance)

65. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department is undertaking any research into the connection between the creation of jobs and the level of employee national insurance contribution.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department is not undertaking any research in isolation into the connection between employee national insurance contributions and the level of employment. Some research has been commissioned from the Centre for Labour Economics into the factors that determine the demand for employment. This has included the cost of labour to employees, one item of which is employees' national insurance contributions.

Job Splitting

66. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the job-splitting scheme.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the future operation of the job-splitting scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: As my right hon. Friend announced on 12 November 1984 at col *444*, we are continuing the job-splitting scheme in 1985-86 with an increased grant and with further changes to make it more attractive to employers. The details of the proposed changes will be announced in the very near future.

Unemployment (Haverhill)

67. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to seek to reduce unemployment in Haverhill.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining their economic policies which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing while encouraging enterprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. That is the only way to generate lasting jobs in Haverhill and elsewhere. In the meantime we are spending over £2 billion this year on a range of employment and training measures to help the unemployed.

Apprenticeships

68. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people were undertaking craft apprenticeships in the engineering industry on *(a)* 31 December 1979 and *(b)* 31 December 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the engineering industry training board estimates that the number of young people undertaking engineering craft apprenticeships was 38,000 for the training year from September 1979 to August 1980, and 37,500 for the last complete training year, to August 1984.

The numbers entering traditional apprenticeships will become increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken by industry because of both the reform of existing arrangements and the substantial provision of initial skills training now taking place under the youth training scheme.

Wages Councils

70. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the workings of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently examining the operation and effects of the wages council system. We have not yet come to any final conclusions.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the activities of wages councils in 1984; and whether he is satisfied with their results.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently examining the operation and effects of the wages council system, including present and past activities of councils. We have not yet come to any final conclusions.

Unemployment (East Anglia)

71. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in East Anglia.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining their economic policies, which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing while encouraging enteprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. That is the only way to generate lasting jobs in East Anglia and elsewhere. In the meantime we are spending over £2 billion this year on a range of employment and training measures to help the unemployed, which are currently benefiting over 13,500 people in East Anglia.

Training

72. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to seek to encourage industry to spend more money on training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We have launched a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of adult training. One of the key messages to employers is that expenditure on training is an investment as essential as investment in plant and equipment. We are encouraging employers to reform their own training arrangements to make this investment more cost-effective. As part of the restructuring of its own adult training programmes, the Manpower Services Commission will give particular emphasis to initiatives which encourage greater attention by employers to adult training needs. For example the Commission has introduced a scheme of local grants to encourage employers' own training efforts. The Manpower Services Commission and Education Departments are also offering financial help to assist employers to collaborate with training providers to define their training needs and explore possible ways of meeting them.

Skills Training

74. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the commissioner of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss skills training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss a wide range of issues, including training.

EC (Unemployment)

77. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps have been taken by the European Economic Community to reduce unemployment within the member states.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Community measures which help employment include those which promote vocational training, employment opportunities and new technology, and the European social and regional development funds. The further development of the common internal market of 270 million people would make a major contribution to helping employment.

School Leavers

79. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of Employment whether he is satisfied with th opportunities for school leavers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our economic p designed to provide the conditions under whi and commerce can create sustainable jobs leavers and others. Meanwhile, the Gover concerned to see that there are constru worthwhile opportunities for young people.

Thames Water (Chlorine Storage)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of Employment what plans exist to protect community in the event of a major industri occuring at the Thames Water site in Lea Br Leyton where chlorine is stored; and if he w statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Thames water au drawn up emergency procedures to be follow event of a chlorine leak. Storage arrangements are such that the risk of a major industrial considered to be remote. The site is subject to t of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulat but the amount of chlorine stored does not r preparation of emergency plans under the regula Health and Safety Executive has informed both authority and the fire authority about the a substances stored including chlorine and the them.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of Employment what safety arrangements t regulating the Thames Water site in Lea Bri Leyton where chlorine is stored.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The site is subject to t and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and Notification of Installations Handling Substances Regulations 1982 and the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984. Th tion is enforced by HM inspectors of factories, out regular inspections.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of Employment what is the number of occasions, relevant dates in the past five years when the Water site in Lea Bridge road, Leyton where c stored, has been inspected by the Health an Inspectorate; and whether all safety recomm made have been met.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The site was vistited inspectors of factories on six occasions during the years, on 12.6.80, 2.7.80, 14.8.80, 31.3.83, and 8.2.85. At these visits the chlorine arrangements were reviewed. Recommendaations the earlier visits have been met by the constru improved storage facilities, including a new building.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of S Employment if he will release the London bor Waltham Forest and other relevant public bodies constraints of official secrecy and other regulation

they can fully consider safety requirements and emergency plans in respect of the Thames Water sites in the borough where chlorine is stored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The local authority and the fire authority have been informed by the Health and Safety Executive of the location of this site and the nature and quantities of materials stored. There is no legislation which prevents local authorities from fully considering safety requirements and emergency plans of sites in their area as they affect the authorities' responsibilities for public health, public safety and the protection of the environment.

Accident Hazard Areas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the safety regulations relating to category one accident hazard areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 distinguish a set of sites where potential major hazards exist. Health and safety at work legislation (the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and relevant regulations and orders) apply.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of people in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment in manufacturing industry for each year since 1973 to the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the available information for Great Britain from 1973 to 1984. Figures are given for males and females in full-time and part-time employment using information from the censuses of employment carried out in June each year from 1973 to 1978 and in September 1981, the most recent census for which results are available. Censuses were not carried out in 1979 or 1980 and the estimates of full-time and part-time employment for those years and for June 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 relate only to females; separate estimates of males in full-time and part-time employment are not made between censuses of employment.

Employees in employment in manufacturing industry (Great Britain)

	Full-time		*Part-time*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
June 1973	5,295,700	1,799,200	77,700	519,900
June 1974	5,278,600	1,773,600	86,300	598,100
June 1975	5,094,100	1,653,700	81,100	535,600
June 1976	4,968,100	1,585,800	79,200	497,500
June 1977	4,985,300	1,618,800	78,100	500,500
June 1978	4,959,100	1,610,900	85,000	492,200
June 1979	n/a	1,619,500	n/a	490,500
June 1980	n/a	1,534,300	n/a	464,900
June 1981	n/a	1,346,600	n/a	409,700
September 1981	4,242,000	1,351,500	68,900	395,000
June 1982	n/a	1,265,800	n/a	382,600
June 1983	n/a	1,194,700	n/a	358,600
June 1984	n/a	1,185,100	n/a	361,800

Management Information System

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will name and describe the different types of regular report made from employment offices and jobcentres as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The public employment service requires a wide range of regular reports from its local managers designed to monitor performance against planned objectives and the pattern and scale of the business handled by jobcentres, and to guide decisions on the allocation of resources.

I shall write to the hon. Member shortly with a comprehensive list of the returns concerned and I shall place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Sheltered Employment

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people deemed capable of only sheltered employment are employed by *(a)* Remploy Limited in workshops, *(b)* sheltered workshops operated by (i) voluntary organisations and (ii) local authorities, other than those for the blind, *(c)* workshops for blind people operated by (i) voluntary organisations and (ii) local authorities and *(d)* on sheltered employment placements within open industry (i) by Remploy, (ii) by local authorities and (iii) by voluntary organisations.

Mr. Alan Clark: At 31 December 1984, 15,456 severely disabled people were employed in the following types of provision:

	Remploy	**Local authorities*	*Voluntary bodies*
Workshops for the blind	—	†2,549 (of whom 1,229 are sighted)	—
Other workshops	8,844	1,748	1,285
Sheltered placements (Sheltered Industrial Groups)	69	679	282
TOTAL	8,913	4,976	1,567

* Figures include 1,223 people (1,000 in workshops for the blind and 223 in other workshops) who are employed in workshops run by

voluntary organisations acting as agents for local authorities.

† The majority of workshops set up to provide employment for blind people now also employ sighted disabled workers.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated capital cost of the establishment of a 30-place sheltered workshop for disabled people.

Mr. Alan Clark: The capital cost of each sheltered workshop varies in the light of such factors as the locality, type of building, the terms on which the property is to be acquired and the range and value of the plant and machinery that is required. However, the Manpower Services Commission estimate that the average cost of building and equipping a 30-place sheltered workshop would be in excess of £500,000.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the capitation grant ceiling which the Manpower Services Commission will pay on behalf of people in sheltered employment to *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* Remploy in 1984-85 and 1985-86, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The final per capita ceilings for revenue support in 1984-85 have been set at £2,490 for workshops run by local authorities and £3,050 for those run by independent volluntary organisations. The Manpower Services Commission will be announcing provisional ceilings for 1985-86 as soon as possible, and I shall write to the right hon. Member when this information is available. Financial support for Remploy is on a different basis and is subject to a cash limit of £56·570 million in 1984-85 and £59·290 million in 1985-86.

Employability Fortnight

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment what assistance his Department and the Manpower Services Commission are giving to the Royal Association for Disablement and Rehabilitation's employability fortnight 15 to 26 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend and I warmly welcome this initiative by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. I have agreed to speak at the Manchester conference and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for the disabled has agreed to speak at the London conference. Senior manpower services officials will speak at the Wakefield and Birmingham conferences. In addition, the commission has been in discussion with the royal association, providing local knowledge about employers for whom invitations to the conferences would be appropriate. Information and publicity material on commission services for employers and disabled people are being supplied for use at the conferences. The employability fortnight will also be another major opportunity for bringing the new code of good practice on the employment of disabled people to the attention of employers.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people *(a)* deemed capable of open employment and *(b)* deemed appropriate for sheltered employment were unemployed on 31 December of each year from 1974 to 1984; and if he will give each figure as a percentage of all registered disabled people at that date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures requested are as follows. They relate to those unemployed disabled people registered for work with the Manpower Services Commission's jobcentres and local authority careers offices. Registration for employment at jobcentres became voluntary in October 1982, and the figures for 1982, 1983 and 1984 therefore relate only to those unemployed disabled people who chose so to register. The percentages relate to unemployed registered, disabled people only, expressed as proportions of all registered disabled people.

	Unemployed disabled people registered for work at Jobcentres and Careers Offices							
	Capable of open employment			*Appropriate for sheltered employment*			*Unemployed registered disabled people as a percentage of all registered disabled people*	
December	*Registered disabled people*	*Unregistered disabled people*	*Total*	*Registered disabled people*	*Unregistered disabled people*	*Total*	*Capable of open employment*	*Appropriate for sheltered employment*
1974* (November)	49,760	N/A	49,760	10,359	N/A	10,359	8·7	1·8
1975	63,620	N/A	63,620	11,575	N/A	11,575	11·4	2·1
1976* (October)	65,150	N/A	65,150	11,395	N/A	11,395	12·0	2·1
1977	63,933	68,229	132,162	10,843	4,132	14,975	12·0	2·0
1978	55,913	68,048	123,961	9,086	3,818	12,904	11·3	1·8
1979	51,359	70,364	121,723	8,264	3,682	11,946	10·7	1·7
1980	60,887	93,152	154,039	7,773	3,812	11,585	12·9	1·7
1981	68,708	110,549	179,257	7,591	4,343	11,934	14·9	1·6
1982†	68,119	115,206	183,325	7,246	4,325	11,571	15·2	1·6
1983†	49,720	76,458	126,178	5,932	3,222	9,154	11·5	1·4
1984†	28,801	44,905	73,706	4,427	2,336	6,763	6·8	1·1

* Figures for December 1974 and 1976 are not available due to industrial action.

† Figures include only those unemployed disabled people who chose to register for employment.

Fluoride

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 184, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, what tests of durability and resistance to damage are carried out on road tankers subject to the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 when carrying hydrofluorosilicic acid solutions in bulk.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under regulation 7 of the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 the operator of a road tanker is required to set out a written scheme for both initial and periodic examination and testing of a carrying tank. The examination and testing must be carried out by a competent person who must certify that the tank is suitable for the purpose. The tests to be carried out are for the operator and competent person to determine, but they are likely to include a pressure test, a check that the material is compatible with the product being carried and examination for signs of cracks, corrosion and damage liable to weaken the integrity of the tank.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 184, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, what are the principal hazards in the event of a fire, spillage or other accident involving the carriage in bulk by road tankers subject to the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 of hydrofluorosilicic acid solutions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The principal hazards are corrosivity and toxicity. The substance is toxic by absorption through the skin, inhalation or ingestion. When heated in a fire, or by reaction with water, the substance decomposes to emit toxic and corrosive fumes.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 184, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, what tests of durability and resistance to damage by impact or tearing are carried out on bags containing sodium fluorosilicate which are labelled in accordance with the Classification Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Sodium fluorosilicate is imported by sea in plastic lined multilayered paper bags which have to meet the requirements of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code issued by the International Maritime Organisation. The requirements relate to waterproofing and include a drop test. They are consistent with the provisions of the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984 which lay down a general prohibition against the supply or conveyance by road of a substance, to which they apply, unless it is in a package which is suitable for that purpose.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive with respect to protective clothing being made available to employees of statutory water undertakers who are expected to handle containers of fluoride.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Water authorities' employees must be provided with protective clothing when they are involved in filling or emptying containers or bags of fluorine compounds. This consists of appropriate overalls, boots and gloves, together with respiratory protection and eye protection.

Youth Training (Accidents)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in circumstances where the Manpower Services Commission's area manpower boards are given details of particular accidents to youth training scheme trainees, it is the practice of commission staff to remind board members of the possibility of criminal or civil proceedings arising from the accident; whether he will advise the Manpower Services Commission that discussion of the details of accidents by boards is inappropriate in such circumstances; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

RAF Basic Trainer

81. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any estimate has been prepared of the number of jobs likely to be created through the award of a contract for the new Royal Air Force basic trainer.

Mr. Butler: An assessment is being prepared based on information provided by each of the four contenders.

Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough

Mr. Critchley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with regard to commercial flying and industrial usage of the Royal Aircraft Establishment airfield at Farnborough.

Mr. Lee: Tenders will shortly be invited for the lease of a 50-acre civil enclave on the airfield as a base for general aviation and light industrial use. Our aim is to make fuller and more cost-effective use of the airfield and at the same time to help alleviate the shortage of facilities for business aviation in the south-east of England.

Local authorities and commercial interests have been fully consulted on these proposals. Special attention has been given to the arrangements under which general aviation might be introduced at Farnborough, in order to strike a fair balance between the commercial needs of operators and the proper concerns of local people. Trials conducted to measure the noise of typical business aircraft which would operate from Farnborough have confirmed that they are much quieter than the military aircraft which operate from the Royal Aircraft Establishment. Restrictions will, however, be placed on the type, weight, movements and operating hours of business aircraft permitted to use the airfield. Liaison between the RAE, the enclave lessee and the local authorities will be established.

Anti-ballistic Missile System

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to develop a space-based anti-ballistic missile system before the expiry of the expected service life of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The Government have no plans to development a space-based anti-ballistic missile system.

Underwater Testing

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the companies currently providing services for the operation and maintenance of the British underwater test and evaluation centre facility at Kyle of Lochalsh which have received financial assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. Lee: From 1 April 1985 services for the operation and maintenance of the BUTEC facility at Kyle of Lachalsh will be provided by RCA Limited, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex and Bond Helos, Aberdeen. Neither of these companis receives financial assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Military Training Areas (Scotland)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of land areas in Scotland which, since January 1983, have been considered for lease or purchse as military training areas.

Mr. Lee: We are ready to consider any suitable areas that become available, but the only land for military training to which serious consideration has been given is at Ardesier (north-east of Inverness) where we are about to complete the purchase of 160 acres.

Air Misses (Western Isles)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses have been recorded in the airspace over and adjacent to the Western Isles in each year since 1970; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into air misses between *(a)* two civil aircraft and *(b)* two military aircraft and *(c)* a civil and a military aircraft.

Mr. Lee: There has been a total of five, each involving one civil and one military aircraft. They occurred in the years 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980 and 1982.

Military Aircraft Practice (Stornoway)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many practice approaches and practice diversions by military aircraft have been carried out at Stornoway airport in each year since 1979; and if he will provide a monthly breakdown of the figures.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 12 December 1984 at column *504*.

WALES

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what approaches he has made to EEC institutions on behalf of Welsh dairy farmers to enable them to qualify for low-interest loans to help them over the present difficulties in the same way as has been open to German dairy farmers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: None. Welsh dairy producers benefit from the capital grant support system under EC directive 72/159, whereas Germany operates a system of interest relief subsidies.

Fluoridation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those community health councils in Wales which have expressed opposition to fluoridation of water supplies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information on the views of community health councils in Wales on this issue is not available. However, Swansea-Lliw Valley community health council and Ynys Môn community health council have written to our Department within the last two years to register their opposition to fluoridation.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those borough, district and county councils in Wales which have passed a resolution on the addition of fluoride to water supplies, indicating against each one whether a decision was in favour or against.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Voluntary Organisation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any proposals to extend support for the work of the voluntary organisations in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: A special grants programme will be established, commencing in the 1985-86 financial year, which will enable assistance to be given to national and regional voluntary organisations which promote conservation or environmental improvement work within Wales. Some £60,000 will be available for the programme in 1985-86. Grants will be available to meet administrative costs or to enable organisations to undertake innovatory or experimental projects.

A press notice—a copy of which has been placed in the Library—setting out detailed information on criteria and eligibility is being issued today. I would take this opportunity of encouraging those voluntary organisations who consider they might benefit from such a programme to approach the Department as soon as possible, preferably before the end of March, but no later than 12 April.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmers (Loans and Grants)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been disbursed each year since 1972 by way of loans and grants from public funds to farmers for the reclamation of land for agricultural purposes; and what was the acreage of land so reclaimed.

Mrs. Fenner: No loans are made for this purpose and I regret that we do not keep separate statistics of grant paid for land reclamation alone or of the acreage reclaimed. The amount of grant paid in the United Kingdom for land clearance and reclamation in each of the years 1979 to 1983 is as follows. Figures for the years 1972 to 1978 are not available and for 1984 will be available later.

	£ million
1979	1·3
1980	2·0

	£ million
1981	2·0
1982	3·2
1983	3·5

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research currently funded by his Department into alternatives to straw and stubble burning.

Mrs. Fenner: Current research into alternatives to straw and stubble burning is listed in our "Register of Research and Development on Straw Disposal and Utilisation". I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library. Total public expenditure in 1984-85 approaches £2 million.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will circulate in the *Official Report* a list of studies made of the total cost of the common agricultural policy to the United Kingdom known to his Department.

Mr. Jopling: Numerous studies have been published about the effects of the common agricultural policy on the United Kingdom, and these vary widely in their scope. A report of a comprehensive study conducted at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, entitled "The Cost of the Common Agricultural policy" by A. E. Buckwell, D. R. Harvey, K. J. Thompson and K. A. Parton (published in 1982), contains in chapter 4 a review of studies undertaken, some of which are ongoing: a copy of this book is in the Library of the House.

Warble Fly

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will give the date when the Wellcome Foundation Ltd., as manufacturers of Cooper warble fly liquid, submitted evidence showing its safety to the consumer in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968; and where that evidence is now deposited.

Mrs. Fenner: The information necessary for the assessment of the relevant product licence application was submitted on 20 December 1978 and is held on departmental files.

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place in the Library the evidence in support of his answer to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *50*, that Derris could only be used effectively during a short period of the year when the warble larvae have punctured the hide of an animal.

Mrs. Fenner: As requested, I shall arrange for the evidence to be placed in the Library of the House.

Poultrymeat

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to give protection to British poultrymeat processors from unfair overseas competition.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the total annual number of checks made by his Department and by local authorities on the water content, quality and hygiene of imports of poultrymeat since the latest regime was established.

Mrs. Fenner: Responsibility for enforcement of the relevant legislation lies with local authorities and information available to me is insufficient to permit an overall estimate of the number of checks made to be calculated. All imports of poultrymeat must be accompanied by a health certificate, which is subject to scrutiny at the point of import.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions have been brought following checks by his Department and local authorities on the water content, quality and hygiene of imports of poultrymeat in the last three years for which figures are available; and what was the outcome of these prosecutions.

Mr. Fenner: Prosecutions are a matter for local authorities and the information sought is not held centrally. My Department has, however pursued with the appropriate authorities of the exporting countries a number of complaints in relation to the requirements of directive 71/118 and the Poultry Meat (Water Content) Regulations 1984.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what manpower and financial resources are available to his Department and to local authorities to check the water content, hygiene and quality of imports of poultrymeat.

Mrs. Fenner: Enforcement of these provisions is a responsibility of local authorities, which draw as necessary on their overall manpower and financial resources. In addition, my Department's veterinary service is available to advise as requested on poultrymeat hygiene matters.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers are available to his Department and to local authorities to check the water content, quality, and hygiene of imports of poultrymeat at the point of entry and thereafter.

Mrs. Fenner: The Food Act provides powers to examine consignments of imported poultrymeat, to take samples for analysis and to enter premises for these purposes.

Food Labelling

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis he selected the consumer bodies set out in the answer of 20 February, *Official Report*, column 459, with whom he has commissioned a survey into consumers' attitudes towards and understanding of fat and nutrition labelling of foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The consumer bodies concerned had already decided to carry out a survey and we joined them.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has not involved the Health Education Council in research in regard to food labelling.

Mrs. Fenner: We consult widely on any proposals for food labelling as required by section 118 of the Food Act 1984 and the equivalent provision of previous enactments. Those consultations have included the Health Education Council.

Waste (Sea Disposal)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of loads of *(a)* sewage sludge, *(b)* industrial waste and *(c)* dredged spoils destined for sea disposal were sampled in each of the last five years.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: Materials for disposal at sea under the provisions of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 are sampled in a variety of ways according to their nature and their potential harm to the marine environment. For sewage sludge, sampling is undertaken on application for an annual licence. Samples of industrial wastes are taken on initial application and repeated as appropriate in the case of material changes. In addition, 7 per cent. of all vessel sailings undergo inspection by enforcement officers. As for dredged spoils representative samples are taken from all consignments greater than 10,000 tonnes as required by the provisions of the Oslo and London dumping conventions. As such spoils tend to be of constant composition, further samples are not regularly taken.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of sewage sludge was dumped at sea in each year since 1970.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: The Government do not collect annual statistics on the proportion of sewage sludge dumped at sea. It has, however, been estimated that the proportion was between about one quarter and one third in the last decade.

Croxteth Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of Croxteth hall, Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *245*]: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts met representatives of the Croxteth community Forum. He advised them that in his view Croxteth does not fall within the terms of clause 44 of the Local Government Bill. It will be transferred to Liverpool city council after the abolition of Merseyside county council.

Speke Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of Speke hall in Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *245*]: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts has had one representation about his intention to transfer the full repairing lease of Speke hall to Liverpool city council after the abolition of Merseyside county council. This was from the National Trust, which owns the hall. He is holding further discussions with it.

Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of the Philharmonic hall in Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *245*]: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts has received several representations from members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society about the future of the Philharmonic hall in Liverpool. He has undertaken to consult the society in the course of preparation of the relevant property order provided for in clause 92 of the Local Government Bill.

Royal Shakespeare Company

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts to what extent the Arts Council subsidy allocated to the Royal Shakespeare Company was reduced for 1985 in comparison with 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: The subsidy is to be increased, not reduced. The figures are:

	£
1984-85	4,900,000
1985-86	4,997,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Vehicle Thefts

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vehicles were stolen in each police division in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of vehicles taken without their owners' consent in each police division in each of the last four years are as follows:

Division	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*		*1984*
			1 January to 30 September	*1 October to 31 December*	
A	824	899	969	559	1,890
B	1,354	1,167	950	355	1,370
C	662	514	370	—	—
D	582	428	409	362	1,540

Division	1981	1982	1983 1 January to 30 September	1983 1 October to 31 December	1984
E	251	202	159	94	558
F	708	625	641	—	—
G	202	208	234	37	187
H	216	264	213	80	236
J	128	208	139	145	554
K	46	48	38	13	69
L	20	18	12	5	30
M	42	31	24	—	—
N	245	138	99	40	164
O	97	73	40	20	78
P	108	92	92	39	229
R	374	423	358	—	—
TOTALS	5,859	5,338	4,747	1,749	6,905

On 1 October 1983 the number of RUC divisions was reduced from 16 to 12 and divisional boundaries were redrawn.

Joyriders

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been killed or injured by joyriders in stolen vehicles in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

Mr. Scott: Road accident statistics are not maintained in a way which would allow deaths and injuries caused by drivers of stolen vehicles to be separately identified.

Limited List Prescribing

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it is his intention that the limited list of drugs prescribable on the National Health Service in Northern Ireland should be identical to that in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Engineering

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any public funds being put into the proposed successor to the Molins engineering factory at Maydown are being paid on the same terms as funds paid to other engineering firms in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are now employed in general engineering in the Londonderry, East constituency; and what were the numbers in each of 1975, 1980, 1981 and 1983.

Dr. Boyson: In 1981 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 1,028 employees in employment in engineering in the Londonderry, East constituency. The corresponding figure for 1975 was 444. Information is not available for the other years requested.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been paid in grants by the Local Enterprise Development Unit and the Industrial Development Board and their predecessors to engineering firms in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and to firms in the local government areas of Londonderry, Limavady, Coleraine, Magherafelt and Strabane during the same years.

Dr. Boyson: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

District Council Members (Expenses)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the allowances and expenses for which members of district councils qualify.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *260*]: District councillors qualify for attendance, special responsibility and special loss allowances, the reimbursement of expenses of official and courtesy visits and payments towards expenses incurred in attending conferences and meetings. They are also entitled to travel and subsistence allowances. All of these are determined by regulations made by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pensions

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost in 1982-83 and 1983-84 of public service pensions including lump sum payments.

Mr. Peter Rees: The total expenditure on pension benefits including lump sums for the main public services, that is the civil service, local government, teachers, national health service, police, firemen and the armed forces, was for 1982-83 £4,330 million and for 1983-84 £4,850 million.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated gross cost of paying public service pensions in the current year including lump sums; and what percentage this represents of the current cost of wages and salaries in relevant pensionable employment in the public sector.

Mr. Peter Rees: The estimated total expenditure in the current year (1984-85) on pension benefits including lump sums for the main public services, that is the civil service, local government, teachers, national health service, police, firemen and the armed forces, is £5,250 million.

This is equivalent to approximately 17·6 per cent. of the estimated total pensionable pay of £29·8 billion for these services this year.

Income Tax (Wage Settlements)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any evidence that income tax cuts leading to lower wage settlements will have an incentive effect.

Mr. Peter Rees: Lower wage settlements will provide an incentive to firms to increase employment. Evidence on the relationship between wages and employment is set out in the recent paper by Treasury officials.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the nature of the causal relationship between a balance of payments surplus on the oil account and a balance of payments deficit on trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Peter Rees: Because the overall balance of payments—current and capital accounts—sums to zero, a surplus on oil account will be associaed with a corresponding deficit on the rest of the current account unless there is a higher surplus on the total current account. One mechanism by which such a change in the structure of the current account occurs is through a change in the real exchange rate.

Food Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1969-70 and for the latest available 12 month period *(a)* the amount of duties, levies and other protective charges levied on United Kingdom imports of foodstuffs admitted from countries not benefiting from any form of preference and *(b)* the amount so collected as a percentage of the value of the goods so admitted.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table gives for the financial year 1969-70 and for 1984 the duty and levies on imports of food and live animals chiefly for food (Standard International Trade Classification (rev 2) section 0).

	1969-70	*1984*
	£ million	£ million
Protective customs duty	34·6	53·5
Agricultural levy	*—	122·8
Total revenue	†34·6	176·2
	per cent.	*per cent.*
Total revenue as a percentage of value of dutiable goods	8·1	40·1

* Net levy receipts, charged under the provisions of the Agriculture and Horticulture Act 1964, of £0·5 million were also received. EC Agricultural levies superseded these import levies on 1 February 1973.

† As agricultural products were outside the scope of the EFTA convention, some agricultural products of EFTA origin attracted the full rate of duty. Such goods were not separately distinguishable in the duty statistics and have been included in this figure.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many occasions in the last financial year the ex statutory concession was exercised on value added tax construction of self-contained buildings by a charity.

Mr. Hayhoe: During the financial year 1983-84 th were 166 claims for refund of VAT on construct projects carried out under the extra-statutory concess for charities and other voluntary bodies.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many occasions in the last financial year the ex statutory concession was exercised on value added tax imported second hand cars.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not collected.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many occasions in the last financial year the ex statutory concession was exercised on value added tax repossessed goods.

Mr. Hayhoe: Available information suggests that t concession is exercised between 1,000 and 1,500 time year.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which fiscal year the extra-statutory concession w introduced on value added tax on imported secondha cars.

Mr. Hayhoe: The concession was introduced in t financial year 1979-80.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which fiscal year the extra-statutory concession w introduced on value added tax on the construction of se contained buildings by a charity.

Mr. Hayhoe: The special arrangements for chariti and other voluntary bodies were introduced as an extr statutory concession in the financial year 1978-79.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which fiscal year the extra-statutory concession w introduced on value added tax on repossessed goods.

Mr. Hayhoe: The present concession was introduc in the year 1976-77, although there have been min alterations to its scope since then.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer he will specify how the imposition, rate and revenue fro value added tax in the United Kingdom differs from ea of the other members of the European Community.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 198 c. *57*]: The imposition of value added tax in member stat of the European Community is governed by the six Council directive of 17 May 1977 (77/388/EC), whic prescribes a harmonised structure for the tax and contai detailed rules on its operation. Although member state value added tax systems generally conform with thes provisions, the directive permits certain exemption derogations and transitional provisions, as a result which there are detailed differences in the tax regimes.

On the latest available information, the current rates VAT are understood to be as follows:

	Standard Rate per cent.	Other Rates per cent.
Belgium	19	0, 6, 17, 25, 33
Denmark	22	0
France	18·6	2·1, 4, 5·5, 7, 33⅓
Germany	14	0, 7
Ireland	23	0, 2·2, 10
Italy	18	2, 9, 38
Luxembourg	12	0, 3, 6
Netherlands	19	0, 5
United Kingdom	15	0

Note:
The Irish rates shown will apply from 1 March 1985. Greece has not yet introduced VAT.

The most recent comparable information on VAT revenue in EC member states is for the calendar year 1982 and is as follows:

	£ million*
Belgium	3,807
Denmark	3,290
France	28,781
Germany	24,429
Ireland	797
Italy	11,352
Luxembourg	115
Netherlands	3,285
United Kingdom	14,480

* Converted into sterling at exchange rates prevailing in December 1982.
Source: Revenue statistics of OECD member countries 1965-83.

European Community (Agricultural Levy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the principal agricultural products the amount of the European Economic Community levy collected each year since 1973 under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information for the main categories of agricultural products for the calendar year 1984 is as follows:

	£ million
Cereals	56·1
Meat, including livestock for consumption	9·9
Dairy products	46·1
Other items	40·5
TOTAL	152·6

For previous years, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 4 July 1984, at columns 150-52.

More detailed information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Customs and Excise

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the provincial offices of the investigation division of Customs and Excise and the numbers of staff employed in the investigation division in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: Provincial offices of the investigation division of Customs and Excise are located at:

1. MANCHESTER
4th Floor Aldine House,
New Bailey Street,
West Riverside,
Manchester M3 5FU

2. LEEDS
4th Floor Eastgate House
10 Eastgate
Leeds LS2 7JL

3. BRISTOL
Eagle House
Colston Avenue
Bristol BS1 4SW

4. BIRMINGHAM
St. James House
17 Horsefair
Birmingham B1 1DJ

5. GLASGOW
249 West George Street
Glasgow G2 3QE

The complement of the investigation division in each of the past five years was:

Year	Complement
1980	469
1981	547
1982	610
1983	614
1984	614

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Neale asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he intends to make in the 714 certificate procedure to permit more participants in the enterprise allowance scheme to commence operation as sub-contractors immediately they cease to qualify for the allowance.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *424*]: I have no plans at present to change the rules of the construction industry tax deduction scheme. All applicants for certificates have to satisfy the same conditions. There is nothing to prevent a person who cannot qualify for a certificate working as a self-employed subcontractor.

Company Cars

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much a business user of a company car pays in petrol tax and duty where his annual mileage is 25,000 miles.

Mr. Hayhoe: Typically about £650 a year in petrol duty at the current rate. Value added tax on petrol can be reclaimed in respect of business use.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the additional cost to a company car user travelling 25,000 miles per annum if petrol duty were increased by 35p per gallon.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is estimated that the additional annual cost would be about £275.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will raise the level of salary, at which taxation of company cars starts, to £12,000 per annum.

Mr. Moore: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Tobacco Products (Taxation)

Mr. Beggs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the level of taxation on tobacco products from *(a)* organisations representing tobacco producers and *(b)* organisations representing employees in the tobacco industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Groups throughout the industry, including the Tobacco Advisory Council, have made representations. I have also received a full report of the discussion held with the deputation led by the hon. Member. All the arguments put forward will be carefully considered.

Investment Income

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of married couples where both husband and wife are earning who currently have investment income to aggregate.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *291*]: It is likely that a high proportion of two-earner married couples have some investment income. The Inland Revenue's survey of personal incomes does not provide information on this point, because of incomplete coverage in the survey of investment income on which liability to basic rate tax has already been satisfied (for example by deduction at source or under the building societies' composite rate arrangements). However, one third of those two earner couples shown in the latest survey (for 1982-83) as having investment income had some of this income recorded as belonging to the wife or owned jointly by the spouses. This should be treated as only a broad indication of the likely proportion for two earner couples in general.

Christmas Tips

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees are estimated to be receiving Christmas tips; and *(a)* what extra revenue is expected to be raised during 1984-85 as a result of increased attention by the Inland Revenue to assessing these benefits and *(b)* what are the estimated extra administrative costs involved in collecting the tax involved.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *424-25*]: I regret that the detailed information requested is not available centrally.

Taxation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what increases in taxation would be required if one third of the total sum raised in local rates were raised through direct taxation, value-added tax, and excise duties on all items including tobacco, alcohol and petrol, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March c. *425*]: It is estimated that the changes necessary to an additional £4·4 billion (equivalent to one third of rates revenue at 1984-85 prices) would be of the ord

(i) an increase of just over 4p in the basic rate of i tax; or

(ii) an increase in the standard rate of VAT from 15 pe to 20 per cent; or

(iii) an across-the-board increase of about 35 per cent. excise duty rates.

Tax Rates

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exch if he will estimate the cost of introducing a 25p in £ band rate for the first £500, first £750 and first £1,0 taxable income in 1985-86, in terms of lost revenue t Exchequer.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March c. *426*]: The direct revenue costs are estimated to be £575 million, £850 million, and £1,120 mil respectively, in a full year at 1985-86 levels, comp with the income tax regime resulting from statu indexation from 1984-85 of allowances, thresholds bands. The estimates assume that a separate lower band would also be available to a married couple ag the wife's earned income; and that the threshold for hi rates of tax would be unaffected by the introduction o lower rate band.

Broad and Narrow Money

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Re* a table showing the increase in the supply of broad m and narrow money in real terms since 1973 and 1 respectively, compared with Germany, the United S of America and Japan.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested contained in the following table. The table prov figures for the growth in the nominal money supply, pr (as measured by the GNP/GDP deflator), and figures the real money supply derived from these. The dat given to 1984Q3, the latest quarter for which there is for all of these countries. Interpretation of these fig ought to take into account any established trends in velocity of circulation.

For the United Kingdom narrow and broad money represented respectively by MO and £M3, the curre targeted aggregates. The series for other countries taken from the IMF's "International Financial Statisti The figures for narrow money for other countries are cl to MO in coverage. They are not necessarily the ta aggregates, so for the US M1 is given as well. With reg to broad money differences in coverage between count are likely to assume greater importance, and there is m scope for distortion (for example, in the United Kingd as a result of financial liberalisation since 1979).

Growth in the broad and narrow money supply since 1973 and 1979
(average percentage change per annum)

	United Kingdom		Germany		United States			Japan	
	Narrow money	Broad money	Narrow money	Broad money	Narrow money	M1	Broad money	Narrow money	Broad money
Nominal money supply									
1973 to 1984 3rd quarter	9¼	12½	4¼	6¾	6½ 6¾	10	6½	10	7¼
1979 to 1984 3rd quarter	4½	14¾	2	4¼	5¼	7	8¾	2½	
Real money supply									
1973 to 1984 3rd quarter	−3½	−½	2½	5	½	½	3¼	1½	4¾
1979 to 1984 3rd quarter	−5	4½	4	6¼	¾	2½	4¼	1	5¾
Inflation (as measured by GNP/GDP deflator)									
1973 to 1983 3rd quarter		13¼		4¼			6		5
1979 to 1984 3rd quarter		9¾		3¾			4¼		1½

Notes:

(i) Nominal monetary aggregates were deflated by the GNP deflator. While money stock data is end-of-period, for 1973 and 1979 calendar year values for the deflator were used.

(ii) For the United Kingdom "narrow" money is represented by MO and "broad" money by £M3. (*Source:* Financial Statistics).

(iii) Money supply data for countries other than the United Kingdom is from the IMF's International Financial Statistics. "Broad" money is taken to be the sum of money (line 34) plus quasi-money (line 35). "Narrow" money is taken to be Reserve Money (line 14), and therefore corresponds closely to MO. Note that IMF definitions of money supply differ somewhat from national definitions.

(iv) For the US only the table also shows figures for M1, in view of M1's role as an important target variable in US monetary policy.

Non-North Sea Profits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will explain the reason for the oscillation of non-North sea profits in the simulation given in his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 568, about the relationship between real wages and profits; and what are its implications for economic policy.

Mr. Peter Rees: The time path of non-North sea profits in the simulation reflects the dynamics in the various relationships determining output, prices and costs. There are no clear implications for economic policy.

Savings Ratio

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* particulars of the change in the savings ratio referred to in paragraph 3.27 of his paper on wages and employment together with the consequential effect on interest rates and the exchange rate.

Mr. Peter Rees: The change in the saving ratio in the simulation referred to in paragraph 3.27 is shown below. The effects on interest rates and the exchange rate in this simulation are shown in Table A, Annex B of the paper by Treasury officials on "The Relationship between Employment and Wages".

Simulated effects of lower nominal wage, unchanged nominal framework†*

Changes from base	Saving ratio (percentage points)
Year	
1	−0·5
2	−0·2
3	0·1
4	0

* Nominal wages are reduced to the extent necessary to reduce real wages by 2 per cent.

† Unchanged money supply (average of MO and £M3); unchanged PSBR/GDP ratio achieved by varying income tax; unchanged cash-limited expenditure in real terms.

Wages and Unemployment

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what effect an increase in the money supply has on the real product wage for the purposes of his analysis of the relationship between employment and wages;

(2) what effect an increase in interest rates has on the real product wage for the purposes of his analysis of the relationship between employment and wages;

(3) what effect an increase in the exchange rate has on the real product wage for the purposes of his analysis of the relationship between employment and wages.

Mr. Peter Rees: The analysis of the relationship between employment and wages involved several simulations of the effects of a reduction in wages under different assumptions about monetary and fiscal policy. Estimates of the effect on the real product wage of an increase in the money supply, interest rates or the exchange rate were not made in the course of this analysis and would depend on the particular assumptions adopted.

Commodity Prices

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what study he has made of the effect of commodity prices on the level of inflation in the United Kingdom; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what effect the change in the level of commodity prices has had on the level of inflation in the United Kingdom since 1981.

Mr. Peter Rees: The relation between world commodity prices and United Kingdom inflation depends on the stance of economic policy; in particular on whether or not the Government simply accommodate inflationary pressures. The MTFS provides a framework within which United Kingdom inflation has been, and will continue to be, reduced irrespective of movements in world commodity prices.

Funeral Charges

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue raised, in the latest year for which figures are available, of value added tax levied on *(a)* funeral charges and *(b)* engraving and erecting gravestones.

Mr. Hayhoe: *(a)* The supply by an undertaker of funeral services and other closely associated goods and services is exempt from value added tax. *(b)* I regret that information is not available on which to base an estimate.

Personal Taxes

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what single rate of non-transferable tax allowance could be introduced at an extra cost to the Exchequer of £1·5 billion if all the existing personal allowances were abolished and married couples were taxed as individuals.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Sanitary Protection

Mr. Corbyn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much value added tax was raised in 1984 on sanitary protection; and what were the comparable figures for each of the two preceding years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Businesses are not required to make returns of the VAT charged on particular supplies of goods and services and information of this kind is therefore not directly available. However, from other sources I estimate that the yield of VAT from sales of sanitary protection for women is of the order of £15 million.

Family Income

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an index in the same manner as his answer of 5 April 1984, *Official Report*, column 403, about taxation changes and the related earlier average tax changes for each group from 1978-79 onwards, in the case of a married couple, where both partners are working, giving the information at multiples of one third, one, five and 10 times the average earnings.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February c. *403*]: The following table shows *(a)* income tax, national insurance contributions less child benefit as appropriate as a percentage of gross earnings; and *(b)* net earnings after income tax, NIC (contracted) and child benefit, in index number form with 1978-79 = 100. Average earnings are those for full time males paid adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence. In the case of the two-earner married couple, the wife's earnings have been taken to be those of a full time woman paid adult rates, and it had been assumed that she is on the same multiple of average earnings as her husband.

Multiple of average earnings

	One-half		*Two-thirds*		*One*		*Five*		*T*
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*
Single									
1978-79	23·6	100·0	27·6	100·0	31·5	100·0	52·2	100·0	67·5
1979-80	22·9	102·6	26·3	103·5	29·7	104·4	42·8	121·6	51·4
1980-81	24·7	103·5	27·7	104·9	30·7	106·3	44·3	122·5	52·1
1981-82	26·9	100·1	29·6	101·7	32·3	103·5	46·4	117·3	53·2
1982-83	27·3	100·3	30·2	101·7	33·0	103·2	45·9	119·4	53·0
1983-84	27·0	104·5	30·0	105·7	33·0	107·1	45·1	125·7	52·5
1984-85	26·4	107·9	29·6	109·0	32·7	110·1	45·2	128·5	52·6
Married									
1978-79	16·0	100·0	22·0	100·0	27·8	100·0	50·5	100·0	66·5
1979-80	16·0	101·7	21·2	102·7	26·3	103·8	41·5	120·3	50·7
1980-81	17·9	102·7	22·7	104·1	27·3	105·7	42·9	121·2	51·5
1981-82	20·8	98·7	25·1	100·5	29·3	102·5	45·2	115·8	52·6
1982-83	20·8	99·4	25·4	100·9	29·8	102·5	44·6	118·0	52·3
1983-84	20·1	104·0	24·9	105·3	29·6	106·7	43·7	124·3	51·9
1984-85	19·2	107·9	24·2	108·9	29·1	110·0	43·8	127·3	51·9
Married with 2 children (both under 11)									
1978-79	2·5	100·0	11·7	100·0	20·9	100·0	48·8	100·0	65·6
1979-80	1·4	102·8	10·3	103·3	19·0	104·2	40·0	119·1	50·0
1980-81	4·9	102·5	13·0	103·5	20·8	105·1	41·6	119·8	50·8
1981-82	7·3	99·5	15·0	100·7	22·5	102·5	43·9	114·7	51·9
1982-83	6·9	100·6	15·0	101·5	22·8	102·8	43·2	116·9	51·6
1983-84	5·9	105·5	14·3	106·2	22·5	107·2	42·3	123·2	51·2
1984-85	4·8	109·4	13·5	109·8	21·9	110·6	42·3	126·2	51·2
Married with 4 children (two under 11 one 11-15 one over 16)									
1978-79	−11·7	100·0	0·4	100·0	13·3	100·0	46·7	100·0	64·6
1979-80	−13·2	103·1	−0·6	102·7	11·6	103·6	38·5	117·4	49·3
1980-81	−8·1	101·7	3·3	102·0	14·3	103·8	40·3	117·7	50·2
1981-82	−6·2	99·5	4·9	99·9	15·8	101·7	42·5	112·9	51·3
1982-83	−6·9	101·0	4·7	100·9	15·9	102·3	41·8	115·1	50·9
1983-84	−8·3	106·1	3·7	105·8	15·3	106·8	40·9	121·4	50·4
1984-85	−9·7	110·0	2·7	109·5	14·7	110·3	40·9	124·4	50·4
Married with (both partners working full time)									

	One-half		Two-thirds		One		Five		Ten	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
1978-79	15·5	100·0	21·6	100·0	27·5	100·0	47·7	100·0	64·1	100·0
1979-80	15·8	101·2	21·0	102·3	26·1	103·4	40·1	116·3	49·5	142·4
1980-81	18·1	102·8	22·8	104·4	27·4	106·2	41·7	118·4	50·5	145·8
1981-82	21·0	98·9	25·2	100·8	29·4	103·0	44·0	113·4	51·8	141·5
1982-83	21·0	99·6	25·5	101·2	29·9	103·0	43·5	115·4	51·5	143·6
1983-84	20·4	104·2	25·1	105·6	29·7	107·3	42·7	121·4	51·0	150·5
1984-85	19·5	108·0	24·4	109·2	29·2	110·6	42·8	124·2	51·1	154·0

Minimum Lending Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect the increase in minimum lending rate in 1985 will have on inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985, c. *494*]: The Bank of England on 20 August 1981 ceased to post a continuous minimum lending rate. It announced a minimum lending rate of 12 per cent. on 14 January for that day only.

The increase in building society mortgage rates in February may cause some temporary upward movement in inflation as measured by the RPI. However the longer term effect of the rise in interest rates this year will be to contain inflationary pressures.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the total tax taken as a proportion of gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *58*]: Comparisons between total tax and gross national product for OECD countries may be derived from "OECD National Accounts, 1965-82" or on a slightly different basis, from "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member Countries, 1965-83". Such comparisons are also to be found in an article entitled "International comparisons of taxes and social security contributions in 20 OECD countries" published annually in *Economic Trends*. The latest version of this article is to be published in the forthcoming edition of *Economic Trends* (No. 376). In view of the interest in such comparisons at this time, I have arranged for advance copies of the article to be available in the Library of the House.

Similar data for the United Kingdom up to 1983 are shown in "United Kingdom National Accounts, 1984 edition", table 3.10.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage changes since the previous year of output-based gross domestic product in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979, giving first the total figure, then the figure excluding oil and gas extraction, then the total percentage change 1978 to 1984 for total output, output-based gross domestic product, and for output-based gross domestic product, excluding gas and oil extraction.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: The information requested is as follows:

	Output-based estimates at constant factor cost	
Percentage change since previous year	Total gross domestic product	GDP excluding oil and gas extraction*
1979	+3·1	+1·8
1980	−2·9	−3·1
1981	−1·7	−2·3
1982	+2·0	+1·4
1983	+3·0	+2·6
1984	+2·5	+2·2
Total percentage change 1978 to 1984	+6·0	+2·6

* Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification, 1980.

West Midlands

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total per annum of taxes paid by the West Midlands region and by Wolverhampton; what sum this represents per employed person; and what is the total of Government aid received by *(a)* the west midlands region and *(b)* Wolverhampton.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *262-3*]: The estimated amounts of income tax and stamp duties on land and buildings, attributable to the west midlands region were respectively £2·5 billion and £30 million in 1982-83. It is not possible to allocate other taxes to particular regions.

The total number of people in employment in the region at mid-year 1982 was 1·9 million. During the period 1 May 1979 to 30 November 1984 a total of £145 million in industrial aid were available to the west midlands region. Similar figures are not available for Wolverhampton alone.

Some parts of the west midlands region, including Wolverhampton, have been given assisted area status, under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act, in November 1984.

Unemployment (Costs)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total costs of unemployment benefit, social security and housing benefit for the unemployed, together with an estimate of revenue foregone from income tax and value-added tax and other duties since 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84, together with his latest estimate for 1984-85.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: Figures for benefits to the unemployed are provided in the table 3.12.5 of the current public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428). Estimates of associated changes in revenue

depend upon the assumed causes of unemployment. There is a wide range of possible effects and no single estimate can be given.

Wages

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United Kingdom and the United States of America the percentage increase in real wages per hour in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* services since 1979 to available date in each case, together with the pe increase in employment and unemployment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to

Wholly comparable information is not readily but the following table sets out the available inf since 1979 on percentage changes in averag earnings, changes in retail prices which may be c with those of earnings, employment and unempl

	*Average gross hourly earnings**	*Percentage changes in Retail prices*	*Employment¶*	*Unem*
Great Britain:				
April 1979 to April 1984	—	+63	—	
Manufacturing industries†	+67	—	−24	
Service industries‡	+78	—	+1	
United States:				
1979 to 1983	—	+37	—	
Manufacturing	+32	—	−12	
Transport and public utilities	+32	—	−3	
Wholesale trade	+34	—	+1	
Retail trade	+27	—	+4	
Finance, insurance and real estate	+38	—	+10	
Services	+36	—	+15	

* Great Britain: full-time adult manual employees working a full week.
United States: production or non-supervisory workers on private payrolls.
† Based on divisions 2 to 4 of 1980 standard industrial classification in 1984 with comparable figures for 1979.
‡ Based on divisions 6 to 9 of 1980 standard industrial classification with comparable figures for 1979.
Excluding those activites indicated above.
¶ Great Britain: employees in employment at March 1979 and 1984.
United States: employees on non-agricultural payrolls.
● Great Britain: claimant unemployed. The comparison is affected by 1983 budget provisions which enabled some some men aged 60 to receive benefits without signing on at an unemployment benefit office.
Sources: Great Britain: New Earnings Survey; Employment Gazette (Department of Employment).
United States: Employment and Earnings (Bureau of labour Statistics).

European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom share of total European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund expenditure in 1983 and 1984; and what is his forecast for 1985.

Mr. Jopling: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom's share of European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund expenditure in 1983 and 1984 was about 11 per cent. and 12 per cent., respectively. For 1985 the Community budget has not yet been adopted and it is not possible to predict the United Kingdom's share of expenditure.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

80. **Mr. Allan Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to increase the earnings unemployed people are allowed to retain before losing supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to increase the supplementary benefit earnings disregard for unemployed people. The treatment of earnings is, however, one of the matters examined during the course of the supplementary benefit review, the conclusions of which are currently being considered.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State fo Services if he will now instruct his local offices to copies of the current supplementary benefit hand each library in their area.

Mr. Whitney: No. As stated in the reply of Friend the then Minister for Social Security to t Member on 25 May 1984 at columns *575-76*, we no reason why public libraries should not purch handbook from HMSO as they do other Gov publications.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State fo Services how many people of working age supplementary benefit for 12 months and over in west midlands and *(b)* the Walsall borough in Ma and if he will give the latest figures for the two gro the percentage difference in each case.

Mr. Whitney: Figures showing the number of in receipt of supplementary benefit for a perio months and over are collected nationally only on a basis. Because of the size of the sample no estimates can be produced for local areas such as borough. Information about regional areas such midlands could be produced only at a dispropo cost.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State fo Services how many people of working age supplementary benefit in *(a)* the west midlands and

Walsall borough in May 1979; and if he will give the latest figures for the two groups and the percentage difference in each case.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of supplementary benefit claims from people of working age which were assessed in west midlands in February 1980 (the earliest figures available), and February 1985 (the latest figures available), are as follows; Walsall borough is covered for supplementary benefit purposes by two DHSS offices; equivalent figures for these offices are also given:

	February 1980	*February 1985*	*Percentage variation*
West Midlands	35,910	32,733	−9
Walsall (East)	793	886	+12
Walsall (West)	1,657	869	*

* These figures cannot be compared because of boundary changes to this local office area in 1983.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the estimated cost of supplementary benefit housing addition payments in respect of mortgage interest in Great Britain in each year from 1982 to 1984; what was the estimated total number of claimants receiving such payments in Great Britain in each year from 1982 to 1984; and how many of these claimants are estimated to have been of working age.

Mr. Whitney: Details of the number of claimants in Great Britain receiving supplementary benefit housing addition payments for mortgage interest and the cost for 1982 and 1983 are as follows:

	Total number	*Cost £ million*	*Number of claimants of working age*
1982	235,000	170	189,000
*1983	250,000	not yet available	206,000

* Estimate.

There are no figures yet available for 1984.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library tables showing, for each supplementary benefit office *(a)* the number of live cases in each of the three categories, pensioners, unemployed and others, for the most recent month for which information is available and *(b)* the number of single payments made to claimants in each of these categories by each office in the same month.

Mr. Whitney: I am arranging for the information to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the number of supplementary benefit appeals which were held in Glasgow in each of the last five years for which figures are available, *(b)* the proportion of the appeals in each year in which the claimants were successful, *(c)* the proportion of the appeals in each year in which the claimants were repesented and *(d)* the proportion of successful appeals in each year in which the claimants were represented.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *280*]: The information was not recorded for the period prior to 1981 and details for 1984 are not yet available because of the effect of the industrial dispute at Newcastle. The information available is as follows:

Glasgow Tribunals

	1981	*1982*	*1983*
Appeals heard	1,916	2,726	2,787
Claimants represented	949	1,291	1,254

Heroin Addiction

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will allocate more resources to the communication of the dangers of heroin addiction and to the provision of treatment and advice centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have allocated £2 million to information and education about drug misuse in 1985-86. A substantial part of this will be spent on a national advertising campaign to warn young people about the effects of misusing heroin. The campaign will be carefully evaluated. The need for the allocation of further resources will be considered in the light of the evaluation results. An additional £10 million has been allocated over three years for treatment and rehabilitation services. So far 95 projects have been approved at a total cost of £7·5 million.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that adequate guidelines have been issued to National Health Service hospitals in respect of clearing up equipment used in cases of deceased patients resulting from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. Interim guidelines on AIDS prepared by the advisory committee on dangerous pathogens were published jointly by Health Ministers and the Health and Safety Commission on 16 January. They give advice on the safe handling and disinfection of materials and equipment used in connection with AIDS patients.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to ask British citizens who have received blood transfusions in the United States of America to present themselves at hospitals for tests for acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It will be open to any clinician to offer such a test to any patient when a reliable test becomes available to the NHS.

Children in Care

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the figures for the number of children who came into local authority care between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, and between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, because their families were homeless; and if he will give this information for England as a whole, Greater London, the metropolitan authorities, excluding London, the non-metropolitan authorities, and for each English local authority area;

(2) what are the latest available figures for the number of children in local authority care because their families

are homeless; and if he will give this information for England as a whole, Greater London, the metropolitan authorities excluding London, non-metropolitan authorities and for each English local authority area.

Mr. John Patten: A child may be taken into care for a number of reasons, of which homelessness may be a contributory factor but is not identified as a specific cause. Given in the tables is information relating to the period between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983 and where available for the period 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984, for the numbers of children in care, and the numbers of children who came into care where the specific cause was that their family had been made homeless. Figures have been given for each local authority, each metropolitan authority, Greater London and England.

Information given in table 1 relates to 31 March 1983 unless otherwise indicated.

Table 1	*Children in Care*
Non-Metropolitan Counties	403
Cleveland (1984)	4
Cumbria (1984)	6
Durham (1984)	12
Northumberland (1984)	4
Humberside	16
North Yorkshire	7
Cheshire (1984)	16
Lancashire (1984)	21
Hereford and Worcester (1984)	7
Shropshire (1984)	15
Staffordshire (1984)	21
Warwickshire	8
Derbyshire (1984)	2
Leicestershire	4
Lincolnshire (1984)	5
Northamptonshire	10
Nottinghamshire	11
Bedfordshire	16
Berkshire (1984)	4
Buckinghamshire	4
Cambridgeshire	5
Essex (1984)	15
Hertfordshire	13
Norfolk (1984)	2
Oxfordshire	6
Suffolk	9
Dorset	15
Hampshire	52
Isle of Wight (1984)	1
Kent	13
Surrey	6
East Sussex	10
West Sussex (1984)	8
Wiltshire (1984)	13
Avon (1984)	12
Cornwall	0
Devon	21
Gloucestershire (1984)	5
Isles of Scilly	0
Somerset (1984)	4
Greater London	95
Camden	0
Greenwich	2
Hackney (1984)	5
Hammersmith (1984)	7
Islington (1979)	0
Kensington	11
Lambeth (1984)	2
Lewisham	2
Southwark (1984)	2
Tower Hamlets	24
Wandsworth (1984)	5
Westminster (1984)	4
City of London (1984)	0
Barking (1984)	2
Barnet (1984)	0
Bexley (1984)	2
Brent	4
Bromley	5
Croydon	1
Ealing (1984)	5
Enfield	0
Haringey	6
Harrow (1984)	1
Havering (1984)	0
Hillingdon	0
Hounslow (1984)	2
Kingston-upon-Thames (1984)	0
Merton (1984)	0
Newham (1984)	0
Redbridge	1
Richmond-upon-Thames (1984)	0
Sutton (1984)	2
Waltham Forest	0
Greater Manchester Metropolitan County	48
Bolton	2
Bury	2
Manchester	12
Oldham (1984)	0
Rochdale (1984)	5
Salford (1984)	8
Stockport (1982)	9
Tameside	0
Trafford	4
Wigan (1984)	6
West Yorkshire Metropolitan County	51
Bradford (1984)	23
Calderdale (1984)	2
Kirklees	11
Leeds	3
Wakefield (1984)	12
West Midlands Metropolitan County	32
Birmingham	4
Coventry (1984)	11
Dudley (1984)	6
Sandwell	1
Solihull	0
Walsall (1984)	6
Wolverhampton (1984)	4
Merseyside Metropolitan County	45
Knowsley (1984)	4
Liverpool (1984)	25
Sefton	7
St. Helens (1984)	5
Wirral	4
Metropolitan County Tyne and Wear	33
Gateshead (1984)	3
Newcastle upon Tyne (1984)	11
North Tyneside (1984)	7
South Tyneside (1984)	8
Sunderland	4

Table 1	Children in Care
Metropolitan County South Yorkshire	33
Barnsley	11
Doncaster (1984)	3
Rotherham (1984)	2
Sheffield	17
England	740

Table 2—*Children who come into care*

Non-Metropolitan Counties	1 April 1982 to 31 March 1983	1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984
Cleveland	7	—
Cumbria	10	—
Durham	4	4
Northumberland	1	6
Humberside	7	•
North Yorkshire	8	•
Cheshire	5	5
Lancashire	18	11
Hereford and Worcester	2	—
Shropshire	6	2
Staffordshire	13	6
Warwickshire	4	•
Derbyshire	13	—
Leicestershire	2	•
Lincolnshire	6	4
Northamptonshire	10	•
Nottinghamshire	7	•
Bedfordshire	—	•
Berkshire	8	3
Buckinghamshire	5	•
Cambridgeshire	1	•
Essex	4	4
Hertfordshire	5	•
Norfolk	1	3
Oxfordshire	3	•
Suffolk	2	•
Dorset	—	•
Hampshire	8	•
Isle of Wight	2	1
Kent	3	•
Surrey	7	•
East Sussex	4	•
West Sussex	2	—
Wiltshire	8	—
Avon	10	8
Cornwall	—	•
Devon	9	•
Gloucestershire	7	2
Isles of Scilly	—	•
Somerset	2	—
Greater London	20	•
Camden	2	•
Greenwich	—	•
Hackney	—	—
Hammersmith	1	2
Islington (1979)	2	•
Kensington	—	•
Lambeth	—	—
Lewisham	—	•
Southwark	—	2
Tower Hamlets (1980)	1	•
Wandsworth (1981)	4	4
Westminster	—	—
City of London	—	—
Barking	—	2
Barnet	—	—
Bexley	1	2
Brent	—	•

Non-Metropolitan Counties	1 April 1982 to 31 March 1983	1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984
Bromley	2	•
Croydon	—	•
Ealing	—	—
Enfield	—	•
Haringey	—	•
Harrow	1	—
Havering	—	—
Hillingdom	—	•
Houslow	—	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	1	1
Merton	—	—
Newham	1	•
Redbridge	2	•
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	—
Sutton	1	3
Waltham Forest	1	•
Greater Manchester Metropolitan County	21	•
Bolton	—	•
Bury	—	•
Manchester	9	•
Oldham	1	—
Rochdale	—	1
Salford	6	5
Stockport (1982)	5	•
Tameside	—	•
Trafford	—	•
Wigan	—	—
West Yorkshire Metropolitan County	33	•
Bradford	11	18
Calderdale	5	1
Kirklees	6	—
Leeds	9	—
Wakefield	2	2
West Midlands Metropolitan County	20	•
Birmingham	10	•
Coventry	4	6
Dudley	—	—
Sandwell	1	•
Solihull	1	•
Walsall	3	4
Wolverhampton	1	2
Merseyside Metropolitan County	21	•
Knowsley	—	4
Liverpool	14	2
Sefton	5	•
St. Helens	2	4
Wirral	—	•
Metropolitan County Tyne and Wear	21	•
Gateshead	8	13
Newcastle upon Tyne	8	11
North Tyneside	3	—
South Tyneside	—	3
Sunderland	2	•

Non-Metropolitan Counties	1 April 1982 to 31 March 1983	1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984
Metropolitan County		
South Yorkshire	6	*
Barnsley	1	*
Doncaster	3	3
Rotherham	—	1
Sheffield	2	*
England	356	*

* Figures not yet available centrally.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which local authorities in England and Wales are operating enhancement schemes under regulation 22 of the Housing Benefit Regulations 1982 and *(a)* what proportion of the 10 per cent. of the cost of the standard housing benefit scheme allowed for enhancement is being utilised by each of these authorities, *(b)* what are the sums involved, and *(c)* what types of enhancement they are operating.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that information relating to payments in exceptional circumstances under regulation 22 of the Housing Benefit Regulations 1982, and payments under local schemes under Section 30 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982, is not available centrally.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households, in total, have lost all entitlement to housing benefit as a result of changes to the tapers and minimum payments rules at April 1983, April 1984 and November 1984, showing the breakdown by household type and tenure.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available in the precise form requested. It was estimated that about 400,000 householders lost all entitlement to housing benefit at April 1983. In respect of all the April and November 1984 changes it was estimated that about half a million fewer households would receive housing benefit in November 1984; the estimated breakdown was as follows:

	Number
by household type	
pensioners	210,000
working	210,000
others	80,000
by tenure	
LA tenants	200,000
private tenants	40,000
owner-occupiers	250,000

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the number of standard housing benefit recipients receiving housing benefit supplement; and what percentage of the total number thought to be eligible for housing benefit supplement this represents.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated that there were about 200,000 housing benefit supplement recipients in 1983-84, the latest date for which estimates are available. These represent about three sevenths of those who were expected to qualify on the introduction of the housing benefit scheme.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his latest estimates of the number of households receiving *(a)* standard housing benefit and *(b)* certificated housing benefit, in total and showing the division between home owners, council tenants and others, and between pensioner households, families with children and others.

Mr. Whitney: The latest detailed estimates remain those that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) gave to the hon. Member in his reply of 23 July 1984, at column *406*. The latest indications, based on subsidy returns from local authorities, are that about 3½ million householders currently receive certificated housing benefit and about 4 million householders receive standard housing benefit.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his Department's latest available figures on (i) the number of housing benefit cases on which a review has been requested, (ii) the number of these referred to a review board, (iii) of the cases so far heard at review board, the total number in which the authority's original determination was *(a)* altered and *(b)* upheld and (iv) the number of cases referred to review boards involving representations about *(a)* eligible rent/rates, *(b)* non-dependants or sub-tenants, *(c)* overpayments and *(d)* other matters.

Mr. Whitney: On the basis of statistical returns made to the Department covering the period 1 April 1983 to 31 December 1984, 12,792 requests have been received for officer level reviews of housing benefit determinations. Of these, 368 cases have been referred to review boards. 318 original determinations were revised and 50 were upheld. The cases referred to the review boards fell into the following categories; some cases have been counted under more than one heading.

	Number
a. eligible rent/rates	315
b. non dependants or sub-tenants	10
c. overpayments	12
d. other matters	43

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he received from the manufacturers of Clarke's Blood Mixture about his limited drugs list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he arrived at his estimate that the revised limited list proposals will save £75 million.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 28 February at column *277*.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether at the time of his announcement of his amended limited list he was aware that the Dutch Government were going to scrap their negative list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We understand that the Dutch Government are amending one part of their limited list and that they have no intention of abolishing it.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to insist that generic manufacture of a given drug is in an identically shaped and coloured product.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he received from the manufacturers of Flora margarine and of Fine Fare hot lemon powder during the consultation period on the limited National Health Service drugs list proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We received no representations about Flora margarine or Fine Fare hot lemon powder during the consultation period on the limited list proposals.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many products on the list of medicines he announced on 21 February that will no longer be prescribable on the National Health Service after 1 April fall outside the seven therapeutic categories referred to in his statement to the House; and if he will list them.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The list of medicines we announced on 21 February that will no longer be prescribable on the National Health Service after 1 April included some 68 products which the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances has advised are not medicines and should not be prescribed by general practitioners. The list also included nine products which have since been deleted. Full details are as follows.

1. *ACBS non-prescribable preparations*
   Acne Aid Bar, Atrixo, Aveeno Bar, Aveeno Bar Oilated, Complan, Cantaflour, Carnation Build-up, Cidal, Covermark Removing Cream, Dansac Skin Lotion, Derbac Soap, Dermacolour Cleansing Cream, Cleansing Milk, Cleansing Lotion, Efamol Capsules, Energen Starch Reduced Bran Crispbread, Flora Margarine, Fortimel, Fortison Low Sodium, Gamophen, Genatosan, Glucodin, GF Gluten-Free Maize Biscuits with Chocolate, GF Gluten-Free Maize Biscuits with Hazelnut, Gluten-Free Thin Wafer Bread, Granogen, Hygienic Babysalve, Ipsel, Lacto Calamine, Laevoral, Linoleic Acid, Lysaldin, Nutrogena Soap, Nicobrevin, Nicorette, Nivea, Nutritionally Complete Supplemented Fasting Formula, Oilatum Bar, Respaton, Rite-Diet Gluten Free Biscuits (chocolate Chip Cookies, Half coated chocolate, Lincoln, Shortcake, Sultana, Custard Cream, Soya Bran), Rite-diet Gluten Free Canned Rich Fruit Cake, ROC Total Sunblock Creams, light tan and deep tan, Safflower Seed Oil, Saxin, Simple Soap, Sorbitol SMA Gold Cap Powder and Ready To Feed, SMA Powder and Concentrated Liquid, Sweetex, Tonic Wines, Taitamyl Gluten Free Bread Mix, Trufree Plain Flour, Pasta Mix, Sweet Biscuit, Bread Mix, United Skin Care Programme, Wate on Tablets, Wines, Woodwards Nursery Cream.

2. *Products deleted from the list published on 21 February*
   Apisate Delayed Release Tablets, Forceval Protein Powder, Optimax Powder, Optimax Tablets, Sorbitol, Synflex Tablets 275 mg, Oxazepam Capsules 30 mgl, Terramycin S F Capsules, Tetracyn S F Capsules.

Fair (Leyton Green)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 8 February concerning the arrangements whereby Waltham Forest health authority leased the land opposite Leyton Green for the purpose of a fair, *Official Report*, column *734*, which councillors were consulted about the arrangement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Private Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how much local authorities are saving as a result of payments being made through supplementary benefit to residents in private residential care homes.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to determine how many residents in receipt of supplementary benefit would have been sponsored by a local authority had supplementary benefit not been available to them. However, the following information may be helpful:

	Number of residents in receipt of supplementary benefit in private and voluntary residential care	*Number of local authority sponsored residents in registered voluntary and private homes and hostels*
1979	11,000	25,017
1980	12,000	25,884
1981	12,000	24,487
1982	15,700	23,359
1983	*25,800	22,053
1984	†42,500	*20,407

* Provisional.
† Estimate.

Babies (Monitoring)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he plans to issue to parents in respect of monitoring accurately the growth rate, weight and temperature of their babies; and what provisions he intends to make available for this purpose.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to issue specific guidance. Parents can already seek advice from family doctors, health visitors and clinics about the development of their children.

Consultant Expansion

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which recommendations issued by the joint consultants' committee in respect of increased consultant expansion he has acted upon and implemented since the joint planning advisory committee discussion document in July 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The consultation document issued in July 1984, in line with a recommendation of the Select Committee on Social Services, related to the senior registrar grade. The document, which was agreed by the joint consultants' committee as a basis for consultation, proposed joint planning between universities and health authorities of numbers in that and equivalent academic grade. Consultation established broad agreement on objectives and discussions are continuing on ways and means.

One JCC suggestion in these discussions explored a once and for all expansion of consultant posts by 100 in two specialties, as an alternative or in addition to joint

planning of senior registrars. Over the last five years, consultant numbers in England have grown by an average of some 250 a year. Further progress towards the objective of providing a greater proportion of patient care by fully trained doctors is for health authorities to carry forward, in accordance with national policies and their own assessment of local needs and priorities.

Blood Test Facilities

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what blood test facilities have been developed to enable donors to be screened for the purpose of preventing infected blood from being transmitted.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 26 February at column *142*.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the recent changes in uprating family income supplement on a 12 month basis rather than the previous system of automatic increase each November; what plans he has to review this change in the course of the current social security review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has received approximately 150 items of individual correspondence on the change in the method of uprating family income supplement. A proportion sought only clarification of the details of change. FIS is included in the scope of the social security review but we cannot anticipate the outcome.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the maximum charge for dental treatment, including crowns or dentures, in April 1979 and *(b)* the maximum charge made for the same treatment in April 1984 and the percentage increase in these charges over the five year period in cash terms and in real terms.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The maximum charge for dental treatment was £30 in April 1979 and £110 in April 1984. That is an increase over the five year period of 267 per cent. in cash terms and 141 per cent. in real terms. However the £30 maximum was first fixed in April 1977 and the increase over the seven year period is 86·5 per cent. in real terms.

Sister Burke-Masters (Surgery Closure)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will inquire into the problems of those unsettled and homeless people who were cared for, when necessary, by Sister Barbara Burke-Masters before her surgery was closed by the Pharmaceutical Society; and if he will invite the views of those interested and with a knowledge of the problems, on what new initiatives would ensure that these people had ready access to primary health care that meets their needs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We intend shortly to ask all family practitioner committees to make it a priority in 1985-86 to report on the extent to which the needs of homeless people for general medical services within their locality are being met.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Pharmaceutical Society concerning the closure of Sister Burke-Masters surgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that inspectors of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain interviewed Miss Burke-Masters on 28 January 1985 and explained to her that her actions in supplying prescription-only medicines to persons not patients of a medical practitioner were unlawful, and that she should cease such supply. I further understand that a general medical practitioner on the list of the City and East London family practitioner committee has proposed that he should accept the patients in question on to his list and employ Miss Burke-Masters to provide them with nursing care, as a means of regularising her position.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the reduction in the National Health Service drugs bill that will be derived from further reductions in return on capital allowed to pharmaceutical manufacturers under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme to take effect from 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We estimate that the full year effect from price increases avoided and price reductions secured will be £40—£45 million (United Kingdom).

Rent Rebate

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) at what income level rent rebate would no longer be payable, at 1984-85 need allowance levels, to *(a)* a single pensioner, *(b)* a pensioner couple, *(c)* a family whose head of household is in employment, with one dependent child and *(d)* a family whose head of household is in employment with two dependent children, who in each case, is paying the average local authority rent in Great Britain, assuming the 21p taper was still in operation;

(2) at what income level rent rebate would no longer be payable, at 1984-85 need allowance levels, to *(a)* a single pensioner, *(b)* a pensioner couple, *(c)* a family whose head of household is in employment, with one dependent child and *(d)* a family whose head of household is in employment with two dependent children, who in each case, is paying the average local authority rent in Great Britain, assuming the 17p taper was still in operation;

(3) at what income level rent rebate would no longer be payable at 1984-85 need allowance levels, to *(a)* a single pensioner, *(b)* a pensioner couple, *(c)* a family whose head of household is in employment, with one dependent child and *(d)* a family whose head of household is in employment, with two dependent children, who, in each case, is paying the average local authority rent in Great Britain, assuming the 26p taper was still in operation;

(4) at what income level rent rebate would no longer be payable at 1984-85 need allowance levels, to *(a)* a single pensioner, *(b)* a pensioner couple, *(c)* a family whose head of household is in employment, with one dependent child and *(d)* a family whose head of household is in

employment, with two dependent children, who, in each case, is paying the average local authority rent in Great Britain, at the current 29p taper.

Mr. Whitney: The gross income levels at which rent rebates would no longer be payable, based on the estimated average local authority rent at April 1984 of £13·97, are as follows:

Gross Income (£s) with a taper of

	17 per cent.	*21 per cent.*	*26 per cent.*	*29 per cent.*
Single pensioner	92·30	83·46	76·24	73·10
Pensioner couple	113·70	104·86	97·64	94·50
One child family with one earner	142·75	133·91	126·69	123·55
Two child family with one earner	155·60	146·76	139·54	136·40

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be *(a)* the estimated cost and *(b)* the estimated gains and losses, by income band, of the introduction of a single taper scheme based on net income and with rent tapers of (i) 35p, (ii) 40p, (iii) 45p and (iv) 50p, and rate tapers of half the rent taper.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

High Rent Area Authorisations

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of tenants who will be adversely affected by the proposed changes in the threshold for high rent area authorisations effective from 1 April *(a)* in authorities which will lose the authorisation entirely and *(b)* in authorities which will continue to receive an authorisation but at a higher threshold; and if he will estimate the average loss per tenant (i) in authorities losing authorisation for both public authority and private tenants, (ii) in authorities losing authorisation in respect of public authority tenants alone, (iii) in authorities losing authorisation in respect of private tenants alone, (iv) in respect of authorities losing class authorisation and (v) in authorities continuing to receive an authorisation but at a higher threshold;

(2) if he will list the local authorities who have *(a)* requested and *(b)* received authorisation to operate a high rent area scheme (i) for public authority and private tenants, (ii) for public authority tenants, (iii) for private sector tenants and (iv) for class authorisations.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the authorities which will lose their high rent area authorisations if the proposed changes to the thresholds are effected from 1 April, showing those who will lose the authorisation *(a)* in respect of both public authority and private tenants, *(b)* for public authority tenants alone, *(c)* for private tenants alone and *(d)* for class authorisations.

Mr. Whitney: The table lists those authorities which will cease to qualify to operate a high rent scheme from 1 April 1985 under the proposed changes, and which are currently in receipt of such an authorisation (i) in respect of both public authority and private tenants, (ii) for public authority tenants only, (iii) for private tenants only and (iv) for class authorisation.

(i) For public authority and private tenants:
Brighton
Guildford
Windsor and Maidenhead

(ii) For public authority tenants only:
Basildon Development Corporation
Broxbourne
City of Cardiff
Central Lancashire
Enfield
Havant
City of Liverpool
City of London
Middlesbrough
Northampton Development Corporation
Portsmouth
Radnor
Rhymney Valley
Test Valley
Vale of Glamorgan
Wimborne
Wokingham

(iii) For private tenants only:
Bath
Bristol
Canterbury
Ealing
Eastbourne
Elmbridge
Epsom and Ewell
Gravesham
Harrow
Hastings
Hove
Kingswood
Lewes
Reading
Reigate and Banstead
Rochester
Rother
Shepway
Surrey Heath
Spelthorne
Wealdon
Woking

(iv) In respect of class authorisations:
Argyle and Bute
Clackmannon
Dumbarton
Dundee
Hamilton
South Holland
West Oxfordshire

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those authorities estimated to be eligible at November 1984 for a high rent area authorisation who have not requested such authorisation, showing those which would qualify for an authorisation covering *(a)* both public authority and private tenants, *(b)* public authority tenants only and *(c)* private tenants only.

Mr. Whitney: The table lists those authorities which in the information currently available to the Department would qualify for a high rent authorisation, but have not applied for it, (i) in respect of both council tenancies and private tenancies, (ii) in respect of council tenancies only and (iii) in respect of private tenancies only.

(i) For council and private tenants:
Ashford

(ii) For council tenants:
Basingstoke and Dean
East Hampshire
Fareham
Maldon
Malvern Hills
Merton
New Forest
Richmond-upon-Thames
Torfaen
Washington New Town
West Devon

(iii) For private tenants:
Bracknell
Castle Point
Croydon
Dartford
Gillingham
Havering
Hounslow
Maidstone
Mole Valley
Newbury
Northavon
Runnymede
Slough
Swale
Tandridge
Thanet
Tonbridge and Malling
Tunbridge Wells
Wandsdyke
Waverley
Woodspring

Fluoridation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the nature and extent of the danger of overdose, and the degree of mottling of the teeth, which can arise when the level of fluoride in the water supply is twice the maximum recommended; what scientific evidence is available to him as to the concentration of fluoride in the water supply at which a risk of fatal poisoning may arise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There is evidence from the United States of America that, where the level of fluoride naturally present in the water supply is around two parts per million, an increasing proportion of children have mottled enamel that is apparent and objectionable aesthetically (Dean H. T. and Elvove E "Further studies on the minimal threshold of chronic endemic dental fluorosis" (Public Health Report 52: 1249-64 September 10 1937)). The ingestion of water containing a concentration of fluoride of 2 ppm, in a temperate climate, has, however, no harmful effect upon general health. This has been established by studies of communities in the USA and in this country where the drinking water contains fluoride in high natural concentrations (for example, Leone et al, Public Health Reports 69 925 (1954); Heasman and Martin, Monthly Bulletin of the Ministry of Health *21* 150-160 (1962)).

With regard to the risk of fatal poisoning, the Regis of Toxic Effects of Chemical Substances (1981-82) repo the lowest lethal dose of sodium fluoride in man to 71 mg per kg body weight, corresponding to a dose 2240 mg of fluoride ion in a 70 kg adult. In order for t quantity to be ingested in the normal volume of wa drunk in 24 hours, the concentration of fluoride in wa would need to be greater than 2000 parts per million.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services if he will list all those community health counc in England which have expressed opposition fluoridation of water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the views community health councils regarding fluoridation is n held centrally.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services what study he has made of the findings Edwards, Pantos and Kraut on the effect of fluoride hydrogen bonding in cyclochrome-C peroxidase inhibit with fluoride; what are the implications of this research f his assessment of the safety of fluoridating water at o part per million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 Marc 1985]: The study of Edwards, Pantos and Kraut publishe in the "Journal of Biological Chemistry" in 1984 (volum 259) does not in any way alter the assessment of the safe and efficacy of the fluoridation of water to one part p million. It has been known for many decades that fluori at high non-physiological concentrations can inhibit enhance the action of many enzymes. There is howeve no evidence of enzyme inhibition in humans from th consumption of water fluoridated to one part per millio and no evidence of any specific harmful effect which coul be attributed to inhibition of enzymes in this manner.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services why he has hitherto indemnified statutory wate undertakers which fluoridate water supplies.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 Marc 1985]: The indemnity offered in respect of fluoridatio schemes covers essentially costs waived in respect o claims that fluoridation is either illegal or injurious t health. No such claim has ever been made successfully i England. The indemnity is offered to assist statutory wate undertakers who wish to accede to requests from healt authorities to implement fluoridation schemes. This is i keeping with the policy of successive administrations t encourge fluoridation, whilst leaving the decision o whether or not to fluoridate to be taken entirely at loca level.

Children's Legal Centre

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Stat for Social Services what grant has been paid to th Children's Legal Centre in each of the years since such funding commenced; what grant is expected to be paid i the forthcoming year; and for what purposes these funds are intended.

Mr. John Patten: The Department has awarded the following grants to the Children's Legal Centre since its inception.

Grant	Period	Purpose
£9,500 for each of 3 years	October 1980 to September 1983	To support a solicitor in providing advice to children, parents and professionals on children's matters which come within this Department's responsibilities.
£1,000 (capital grant)	1980	A contribution, arising from the appointment of a solicitor, towards the cost of office equipment.
£30,000 for each of 3 years	October 1983 to September 1986	To support an advice/information service to children, parents and professionals on children's matters which come within this Department's responsibilities; the grant was not available for other areas of CLC's work, such as Childright.
£2,000 (one-off grant)	March 1984	A contribution towards an analysis of a research project on reviews of children in care.

Drugs

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns 215-16, if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the past five years those drugs which the World Health Organisation has informed his Department of major changes to warnings in their use, distinguishing between *(a)* where no changes to the United Kingdom data sheets have resulted and *(b)* where changes to the United Kingdom data sheets have resulted;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns 215-16, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of drugs that are currently being considered by the licensing authority following information received by his Department from the World Health Organisation of major changes to warnings in their use.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985 c.*67-68*]: The information relating to notification of changes by the World Health Organisation over the past five years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, we believe that few if any changes to United Kingdom data sheets have needed to be made as a result of receiving such information. There are no medicines currently being considered by the licensing authority as a result of such a notification.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns 215-16, if he will arrange for his Department to collect records of variations between United Kingdom data sheets and broadly similar documents in other countries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *67-68*]: No. Major items of information are always available through the World Health Organisation and other international sources. It would not be cost-effective to collect and examine all records of variations on a worldwide basis, country by country, since the size of the task would be enormous and out of proportion to any possible benefits for the use of medicines in the United Kingdom.

Ancillary Services (Contractors)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those companies known to be operating private contracts within the National Health Service, indicating the services offered.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 February 1985, c. *275*]: Health authorities employ a large number of companies to provide services such as engineering, equipment and building maintenance and window cleaning. However, I assume the hon. Member is referring to domestic, catering and laundry services for hospitals. We are aware of the following companies which have been awarded contracts for these services.

Domestic—Berkeley-Taylorplan, Crothalls, Exclusive, HHS, ICC, Initial, ISS, Lesters, Mediclean, OCS, RCO, Reckitts, and Sunlight.
Catering —Allied Medical and Spinneys.
Laundry —Advance, Co-operative (Wallsend), Express, Initial, Kneels, Smarts and Sunlight.

"The Health Service in England"

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, with reference to his Department's pamphlet, "The Health Service in England", he will produce a subsequent pamphlet outlining in detail the results of the implementation of Government policy on the National Health Service.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: The Social Services Select Committee's fourth report suggested it might be useful to consider the advantages of producing an annual report on the work of the Department of Health and Social Security. The annual report on the Health Service in England—a copy of which is in the Library — gives full details of the developments in the Health Service under this Government. The leaflet provides a summary of its main points.

Trent RHA (New Hospital Developments)

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new hospital developments have taken place in the Trent health region since May 1979; and if he will list them.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985]: The following 11 developments each costing more than £2 million have been completed since May 1979:

Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital.
Glenfield District General Hospital, Phase I.
Bassetlaw Hospital, Phase I.
Leicester General Hospital, Mental Illness Unit.
Leicester Royal Infirmary, Phase III.
Lincoln County Hospital, Phase I.
Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham, Phase II.
Rotherham District General Hospital, Phase II.
Kings Mill Hospital, Outpatients Department.
Keresforth Centre, Barnsley.
Kendray Hospital, Barnsley, Phase I.

Nine more schemes are currently under construction and a further eight schemes are due to start in 1985-86.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the specific criteria used to include products on his limited list with particular reference to the section on benzodiazepines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The overall objective given to the group of independent experts who advised the Chief Medical Officer on which drugs should be prescribable was to meet all real clinical needs at the minimum cost to the National Health Service. The criteria they used when considering individual medicinal products were the same in each therapeutic group covered by the limited list. First, was the product required to satisfy a real clinical or therapeutic need not met as effectively by any other product available? If so, it was put on the list regardless of cost. Secondly, did it meet a real clinical or therapeutic need at least as effectively and at the same price as or more cheaply than any other available product? If so, it too was put on the list. Any products that were more expensive but not more effective were excluded.

In considering clinical needs the group took into account not only the specific therapeutic action of the products under consideration but also the practical problems of general medical practice. They therefore considered such problems as the acceptability and palatability of the products—especially for children, old people and the dying—and the need to have a choice of effective remedies wherever practical.

It follows that the criterion for including drugs in the schedule of medicinal products and other substances not to be available on NHS prescription from 1 April 1985 was that, on expert advice, they had no clinical or therapeutic advantage over other, cheaper, drugs in the categories of antacids, laxatives, analgesics for mild to moderate pain, cough and cold remedies, bitters and tonics, vitamins and benzodiazepine sedatives and tranquillisers. Drugs prescribable only for specified conditions—at present only one, Clobazam for epilepsy—are those which have more than one distinct therapeutic use and which meet this criterion for at least one of those uses but do not meet it for all of them.

In addition, the main schedule includes substances which the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances has advised are never drugs or medicines in the circumstances of general practice. The independent experts advising us on the contents of the limited list also made a general recommendation, which we accepted. This was that to achieve maximum economy drugs to be retained should wherever possible be specified and prescribed by a non-proprietary name.

CIVIL SERVICE

Recruitment Surveys

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether the statement to be made when the report of the recruitment survey is undertaken in the north-west and county of Avon is published in the spring will be made by him to Parliament.

Mr. Hayhoe: Detailed arrangements concerning the publication of this report have not yet been made, but it will certainly be made available to Parliament.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Ser when he expects the central analysis of surveys by offic of the Cabinet Office and Her Majesty's Treasury respect of the recruitment surveys undertaken in the no west and the county of Avon to be completed.

Mr. Hayhoe: Officials are expected to complete t analyses in April.

Race Relations

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Ser what steps he is taking in order to update guidance training in respect of personnel policies and procedure they affect race relations in the Civil Service in endeavour to counter possible discrimination; and whom such steps will be taken.

Mr. Hayhoe: All Government Departments h appointed equal opportunity officers whose resp sibilities include guidance on race relations in respect personnel policies and procedures.

It is now a requirement that all new personnel offic in the Civil Service should receive training either by Civil Service college or by their own Department; eq opportunities is a theme and race relations a spec subject area covered by such training.

The Cabinet Office (Management and Person Office) is about to commission the development of resource pack for departmental trainers in the wi aspects of equal opportunities including race relations

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service whom the appropriate timetable is being worked out the institution of a programme of ethnic monitoring cover industrial staff in the east and west midlands; a when he expects to announce the starting date for such programme.

Mr. Hayhoe: The timetable for a programme of ethn surveys is being worked out by officials of the Cabin Office, Her Majesty's Treasury and Departmen employing industrial staff in consultation with the tra union side of the Joint Co-ordinating Committee f Government Industrials. It is hoped that conclusions w be reached this spring.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Servi when he expects the report on the data from th recruitment surveys undertaken in the north-west ar county of Avon by officials of the Cabinet Office and H Majesty's Treasury to be completed; and whether he wi make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The report on these surveys should b published in May.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Servic which Departments are represented in the discussions t set up procedures for obtaining the ethnic informatio from new entrants from the autumn; and whether he ha sought the guidance of the Commission for Racial Equalit in respect of necessary procedures and documentation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The procedures for obtaining the ethni information from new entrants are being settled by th joint working party on race relations in the Civil Service This consists of representatives from Departments and th

unions. The Commission for Racial Equality is given the opportunity to comment on all the necessary documentation. The Departments represented on the joint working party are: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Ministry of Defence, Department of Employment, Department of the Environment, Department of Transport, Department of Health and Social Security, Home Office, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 March 1985

ENERGY

Energy Prices

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy by how much, in percentage terms, energy prices to the consumer have risen in the last five years; and if he will compare this figure with the overall rate of inflation over the same period.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The price index for all domestic fuel and light increased by 52·9 per cent. between 1980 and 1984. The retail price index increased by 33·4 per cent. over the same period. However, between April 1983 and December 1984, when the RPI increased by 7·8 per cent. the indices for gas and electricity, the two most widely used domestic fuels, rose by only 4·2 per cent. and 2·1 per cent., respectively.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list year by year since 1973 the contributions that the National Coal Board has received from the European Community budget towards the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: Contributions from the European Coal and Steel Community towards the Government's redundant mineworkers payments scheme received each year since 1973-74 have been as follows:

	£ million
1973-74	—
1974-75	—
1975-76	2·3
1976-77	2·0
1977-78	3·3
1978-79	2·6
1979-80	4·9
1980-81	1·6
1981-82	3·4
1982-83	7·6
1983-84	11·0

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list year by year since 1979 the number of mineworkers who have taken part in the National Coal Board's redundant mineworkers' payment scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: The following numbers of mineworkers have left the coal industry under the Government's redundant mineworkers payments scheme in the years 1978-79 to date:

Year	
1978-79	3,500
1979-80	1,700
1980-81	3,200
1981-82	10,500
1982-83	8,500
1983-84	20,400

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy what specific schemes he intends to initiate to assist mineworkers who wish to accept redundancy payments to start private businesses of their own.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board has set up a subsidiary company—NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.—to offer financial assistance, counselling, retraining and help with accommodation for businesses in areas where pit closures take place.

I hope that the company will receive many applications for assistance from men who leave the coal industry by taking advantage of the generous redundancy terms available.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the trading deficit on Central Electricity Generating Board operations in 1984; and how this has been financed.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board produces its accounts on the basis of financial years running from April to March. Its results for 1984-85 will be prepared and published in the usual way when they have been audited.

National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, region by region, the number of new jobs which have been created in mining areas resulting from the National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. scheme initiated by the National Coal Board in 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. was set up by the National Coal Board in October 1984 to offer financial assistance, counselling, retraining and help with accommodation for businesses in areas where pit closures take place. The new company has a budget of £10 million, which will be kept under reveiw. Inevitably it will be time before the success of the initiative in creating permanent new jobs can be properly assessed.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what proportion of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd's £10 million is to be allocated to Wales; if National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. is to have offices located in Wales; what will be the relationship between National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. and the county and district authorities in Wales; and if National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. will be staffed by officials from Wales and conversant with the problems of mining communities;

(2) if he will seek the setting up of a separate National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. for Wales; if he will seek the setting up of a National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. office in the South Wales coalfield; and what consultations have been had with the South Wales National Union of Mineworkers regarding location in South Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: These are matters for the board of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., but the company has already taken a number of steps to encourage job creation in Wales.

I understand that funds have been committed to help the Neath partnership, the Blaenau Gwent small business advice service, the Blackmoor small business centre and the Llanelli enterprise agency. The board is also closely in touch with agencies in Merthyr and Cardiff.

Last November the board announced that its former training centre at Tondu was to be developed into an enterprise agency—the Ogwr partnership trust—with a business advisory unit, small start-up units for entrepreneurs and facilities for technology training. A number of offers of financial support to individual businesses have already been made.

Coal Industry

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners were at work on Tuesday 5 March and on Wednesday 6 March; how many mines were either partly or fully operational; and how much coal was produced on those particular days.

Mr. David Hunt: There were about 158,000 NUM members not on strike on Tuesday 5 March and about 176,000 on Wednesday 6 March, equivalent to 85 and 95 per cent., respectively. There were NUM members at work at every pit on both days. The figures for production are not yet available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Information Technology

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the levels of sponsorship which his Department has devoted to information technology training schemes in each year since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

Information Technology Centres (ITeCs)	*£ million*
1979	Nil
1980	Nil
1981	Nil
1982	1·2
1983	3·0
1984	4·3

Microelectronics Application Project Training	*£ milli*
1978-79	0·
1979-80	1
1980-81	1
1981-82	1
1982-83	1·
1983-84	1·

Micros in Schools Scheme	*£ millio*
1981	1·
1982	4·
1983	6·
1984	3·

The advanced manufacturing technology information technology year 1982, althou awareness programmes, also involve some fu development of training schemes, but separa this are not available.

Industrial Research and Developm

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary Trade and Industry how many applications submitted to his Department for industrial development projects in each year since 197 give a breakdown of the regions from applications arose in the same period; and wha of them were not granted.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the inform on data collected in respect of industrial r development projects for which applications made for support under the Science and Tech 1965:

Region	*Number of applications received by region as at 1.3.85*					
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85 (to date)*
East Midlands	53	57	94	183	254	135
North Eastern	16	22	32	147	110	44
North Western	71	82	132	171	283	142
Scottish Office	49	38	70	86	126	45
South Eastern	403	381	630	995	1,254	676
South Western	62	56	111	143	214	94
Welsh Office	16	15	29	49	87	38
West Midlands	70	96	162	238	392	202
Yorkshire and Humberside	68	82	136	158	162	124
TOTALS	808	829	1,396	2,170	2,882	1,500

Of the 9,595 applications received, 2,883 have been rejected as follows:

Number of rejected cases by region from 1.4.79 to 1.3.85 *Region*	*Total*
East Midlands	214
North Eastern	90
North Western	293
Scottish Office	126
South Eastern	1,260
South Western	227

Number of rejected cases by region from 1.4.79 to *Region*
Welsh Office
West Midlands
Yorkshire and Humberside
GRAND TOTAL

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry what assistance he makes available for the formation of enterprise agencies; and if he will make a statement on progress to date.

Mr. Trippier: The main support for the formation of local enterprise agencies (LEAs) must rest with the private sector in partnership with local interests. The Government do, however, foster the development and growth of enterprise agencies in a number of ways, the principle one of which is tax relief on contributions by businesses to LEAs approved by my Department. To date there are 190 approved agencies out of a total of approximately 240.

Further Government assistance to LEAs is provided through pump-priming support by my Department, the Department of the Environment—in some urban areas—and the development Commission in England and the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies in Scotland and Wales, respectively. Total Government support in England to date is in excess of £2·2 million.

The foregoing assistance is also supplemented by the provision, to date, of some £119,000 to Business in the Community to support its work in promoting the LEA movement; and through the encouragement of enterprise agencies to make full use of the information and counselling facilities provided by my Department's small firms service.

Software Products Scheme

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry if he will state in relation to the software products scheme *(a)* how much has been spent on this scheme since its inception, *(b)* how many different projects have been assisted under the scheme, *(c)* what has been the average delay between the submission of an application and a decision being taken and *(d)* what charges have been made by those who have administered the scheme on behalf of his Department as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

(a) to date £46 million has been made available for grants; £9 million in the first nine years to 1982, £10 million in the relaunch of 1982, £15 million in response to demand in 1983 and a further £12 million following a preliminary review in 1984, of which approximately half had been committed at the time of the moratorium;

(b) there have been 322 grants awarded under the scheme, totally £40 million;

(c) the current average delay between submission and a decision is 17 weeks; figures for average delay since the introduction of the scheme are not available and cannot be provided due to disproportionate costs;

(d) administration charges by the National Computing Centre for the life of the scheme have been 4·75 per cent. of the total amount awarded.

Manufactured Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the share of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in world manufactured exports in each of the past 10 years; and what has been the United Kingdom share of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development totals over the same period.

Mr. Fletcher: The available information is as follows:

	OECD share of world exports of manufactures	*United Kingdom share of OECD exports of manufactures*
	per cent.	*per cent.*
1975	82·4	8·3
1976	81·7	7·8
1977	81·5	8·2
1978	81·4	8·2
1979	80·9	8·3
1980	80·4	8·9
1981	79·2	7·8
1982	n.a.	7·7
1983	n.a.	*7·2
1984	n.a.	n.a.

* =estimated.
n.a.=Not available.

Source:
UN year book of international trade statistics
UN monthly bulletin of statistics
OECD series 'C'

Manufacturing Output

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the percentage increase in manufacturing output for 1979 and in each subsequent year to 1984.

Mr. Butcher: The index of production for manufacturing industry is published in a table on page 371 of the 22 February issue of *British Business*, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Industrial Investment

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, using 1979 prices, he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for investment in *(a)* manufacturing industry and *(b)* service industries for each year since 1978.

Mr. Butcher: Constant price investment statistics are not available at 1979 prices. Available information is as follows:

Investment in the manufacturing and the distribution and selected services industries

£ million at 1980 prices

Year	*Manufacturing industries**	*Distribution and selected service industries†*
1978	7,877	11,551
1979	8,205	12,656
1980	7,307	12,761
1981	5,693	12,212
1982	5,596	12,857
1983	5,433	13,394
1984	6,136	n.a.

* Divisions 2-4 of the standard industrial classification (revised 1980) including assets leased to manufacturers from financial industries.
† Divisions 6-8 of standard industrial classification (revised 1980) excluding assets leased to manufacturers.
n.a. denotes not available.

Companies Act 1980

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any recent representations about the operation of section 75 of the Companies Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: No, I have received no such representations.

Spain and Portugal (Agriculture)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the United Kingdom's trade balance in agricultural products with Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Fletcher: In 1984 the United Kingdom had a provisional crude trade deficit in agricultural products of £184·4 million with Spain and £1·3 million with Portugal.

Source: SITC/R2 Sections O and 4 and Division 22 in the United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics*.

Note: Crude trade balance is calculated as United Kingdom exports (fob) less United Kingdom imports (cif).

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what have been the levels of United Kingdom exports and imports of yarns, fabrics and garments, respectively, and the resulting crude trade balance with Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *116*]: The information is as follows:

Table (a): Yarns

	1982 £ million	*1983* £ million	*1984* £ million
Spain			
United Kingdom exports	2·9	3·6	2·0
United Kingdom imports	7·9	10·2	13·2
Crude balance	−5·0	−6·6	−11·2
Portugal			
United Kingdom exports	11·9	12·5	10·4
United Kingdom imports	14·7	19·5	25·2
Crude balance	−2·8	−6·9	−14·8
Turkey			
United Kingdom exports	0·3	0·3	0·8
United Kingdom imports	5·7	9·4	13·1
Crude balance	−5·4	−9·1	−12·3
Cyprus			
United Kingdom exports	1·2	1·7	2·0
United Kingdom imports	0	0	0
Crude balance	+1·1	+1·7	+2·0
Malta			
United Kingdom exports	0·4	0·4	0·7
United Kingdom imports	0·3	0·1	0·2
Crude balance	+0	+0·3	+0·5
Egypt			
United Kingdom exports	1·0	0·7	0·8
United Kingdom imports	1·7	2·0	2·8
Crude balance	−0·7	−1·3	−2·0
Morocco			
United Kingdom exports	2·5	2·9	2·9
United Kingdom imports	0	0	0·3
Crude balance	+2·5	+2·9	+2·6
Tunisia			
United Kingdom exports	0·6	0·3	0·3
United Kingdom imports	—	—	—
Crude balance	+0·6	+0·3	+0·3

Table (b): Fabrics

	1982 £ million	*1983* £ million	*1984* £ million
Spain			
United Kingdom exports	3·7	3·2	3·5
United Kingdom imports	15·0	18·0	24·3
Crude balance	−11·4	−14·8	−20·7
Portugal			
United Kingdom exports	4·1	3·8	3·5
United Kingdom imports	31·1	44·4	49·0
Crude balance	−27·0	−40·6	−45·4
Turkey			
United Kingdom exports	0·6	1·3	2·2
United Kingdom imports	4·7	4·1	5·4
Crude balance	−4·1	−2·8	−3·3
Cyprus			
United Kingdom exports	6·9	8·2	8·2
United Kingdom imports	0·1	0·1	0·1
Crude balance	+6·8	+8·0	+8·0
Malta			
United Kingdom exports	3·0	2·5	3·3
United Kingdom imports	1·3	0·6	1·1
Crude balance	+1·7	+1·9	+2·2
Egypt			
United Kingdom exports	1·8	1·4	1·5
United Kingdom imports	1·9	2·3	3·9
Crude balance	−0	−0·9	−2·4
Morocco			
United Kingdom exports	0·6	0·7	1·2
United Kingdom imports	0	0	0
Crude balance	+0·6	+0·7	+1·2
Tunisia			
United Kingdom exports	0·4	0·3	0·3
United Kingdom imports	0·4	0·3	0
Crude balance	+0	+0	+0·3

Table (c): Garments

	1982 £ million	*1983* £ million	*1984* £ million
Spain			
United Kingdom exports	5·1	4·1	3·7
United Kingdom imports	6·0	7·1	9·2

	1982 £ million	1983 £ million	1984 £ million
Crude balance	−0·9	−3·0	−5·5
Portugal			
United Kingdom exports	1·8	1·7	1·6
United Kingdom imports	69·7	84·5	114·3
Crude balance	−67·8	−82·8	−112·7
Turkey			
United Kingdom exports	0·4	0·3	0·7
United Kingdom imports	9·1	24·5	41·6
Crude balance	−8·7	−24·3	−40·9
Cyprus			
United Kingdom exports	4·4	4·6	6·0
United Kingdom imports	11·1	12·7	12·4
Crude balance	−6·7	−8·1	−6·4
Malta			
United Kingdom exports	0·9	1·1	1·6
United Kingdom imports	11·6	11·2	9·9
Crude balance	−10·7	−10·2	−8·3
Egypt			
United Kingdom exports	3·2	3·2	5·6
United Kingdom imports	0·2	0·3	0·6
Crude balance	+3·0	+3·0	+5·0
Morocco			
United Kingdom exports	0	0	0·3
United Kingdom imports	0·6	0·6	0·6
Crude balance	−0·6	−0·6	−0·4
Tunisia			
United Kingdom exports	0	0·1	0
United Kingdom imports	0·6	0·7	0·7
Crude balance	−0·6	−0·6	−0·7

Source:

(a) Yarns; Data corresponding to SITC R2 Group 651 less Item 651.21.

(b) Fabrics; Data corresponding to SITC R2 Groups 652 to 656 plus Sub-groups 657.1 to 675—4.

(c) Garments; Data corresponding to SITC R2 Division 84 less Group 848 and Item 847.11.

Notes:

(i) United Kingdom imports are valued cif. United Kingdom exports are valued fob.

(ii) Crude balance is calculated as exports (fob) less imports (cif).

(iii) 1984 figures are provisional.

(iv) Due to rounding, balances may not correspond exactly to the difference between export and import figures shown.

(v) 0 signifies a value of less than £50,000; — signifies nil trade.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries with which the United Kingdom had a trade imbalance in visible trade in 1984 but had a positive trade balance in 1979 or 1974, giving the relevant amounts, respectively.

Mr. Fletcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 1 March 1985, c. *321*]: The required information for countries with which the United Kingdom had a trade deficit in 1984 is as follows:

	1974 £ million	1979 £ million	1984 (provisional) £ million
Iceland	−8·5	*	−21·9
Poland	−29·6	−32·6	−97·0
Romania	*	−4·4	−154·5
Algeria	−18·7	−25·6	−1·7
Burkina	*	+0·9	−1·6
Cameroon	−3·2	−2·5	−109·3
Equatorial Guinea	−0·7	+0·6	−0
Burundi	−0·3	+0·4	−0·2
Kenya	−45·1	−54·9	−27·2
Angola	+15·7	+19·1	−123·1
Zimbabwe	−0·8	+1·2	−5·5
Sri Lanka	*	+14·5	−16·0
Macao	−0	*	−39·5
Philippines	−23·6	−26·0	−107·9
New Zealand	−16·1	*	−116·2
Greenland	−1·4	−2·0	−3·9
St. Pierre-Mique	−0·2	−0·2	−0·2
US Virgin Isles	−3·9	+2·4	−53·2
Cayman Islands	−1·6	−2·2	−8·0
Jamaica	−4·3	*	−29·8
Trinidad and Tobago	−22·2	−63·4	−51·4
Aruba	−1·3	*	−10·7
Curacao	*	−15·4	−190·0
Honduras	−2·9	−5·0	−5·0
Costa Rica	−6·1	−6·6	−12·1
Mexico	−42·2	−99·3	−25·4
Colombia	−12·4	−28·6	−36·9
Venezuela	*	−40·5	−151·4
Uruguay	*	−11·3	−19·3

Source: United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics.*

Notes:

(a) Crude balance is calculated as United Kingdom exports (fob) less United Kingdom imports (cif).

(b) 0 signifies a figure of less than £50,000.

(c) * signifies a trade deficit.

(d) Burkina was formerly known as Upper Volta.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Polytechnics (London)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what share of the costs of administering polytechnics he has asked the Inner London education authority to pay; and on what factors he based his decision.

Mr. Brooke: The present contribution formula for the advanced further education pool, which is based as to 69 per cent. on the numbers of school pupils in each authority's area, and as to 31 per cent. on non-domestic rateable value, requires the ILEA to pay about 9·8 per cent. of the pool. The ILEA is taking legal proceedings against my right hon. Friend in respect of his decision not to change the formula and it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time.

Young Persons

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what are the latest estimates of the number of 18 and 19-year-olds in Great Britain currently who are *(a)* in full-time education, *(b)* on youth training schemes,

(c) unemployed and *(d)* engaged in another activity; and how these figures compare with the previous year and 1979;

(2) what are the estimates of the number of 20 and 21-year-olds in Great Britain currently who are *(a)* in full-time education, *(b)* on youth training schemes, *(c)* unemployed and *(d)* engaged in another activity; and how those figures compare with the previous year and 1979;

(3) what are the estimates of the number of 22-year-olds in Great Britain currently who are *(a)* in full-time education, *(b)* on youth training schemes, *(c)* unemployed and *(d)* engaged in another activity; and how those figures compare with the previous year and 1979;

(4) what are the estimates of the number of 23 and 24-year-olds in Great Britain currently who are *(a)* in full-time education, *(b)* on youth training schemes, *(c)* unemployed and *(d)* engaged in another activity; and how those figures compare with the previous year and 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: The available estimates are shown in the following table. Figures for 1979 are not readily available.

Estimates of Education/Labour market status of 18-24 year olds
*Thousands, Great Britain, January each year**

	1980	*1983*	*1984*
		Age 18†	
Total population‡	880	940	940
Full-time education	120	130	150
YTS/YOP	10	30	—
Claimant registered unemployed¶	70	180	190
Other•	680	600	600
		Age 19-24†	
Total population‡	4,800	5,190	5,330
Full-time education	350	390	410
YTS/YOP	—	—	—
Claimant registered unemployed¶	300	670	700
Other•	4,150	4,130	4,220

* Estimates for full-time further education relate to the preceding November and those for universities to the preceding December.
† Ages as at 31 August of preceding year.
‡ Estimated for August ages from mid-year GAD figures.
Excluding YTS/YOP
¶ Claimant unemployed for 1983 and 1984; registered unemployed for 1980.
• Including those in employment (outside YTS), those seeking work but not claiming benefit (for 1983 and 1984) or not registered for employment (for 1980), those who are neither employed not seeking work (eg because of domestic responsibilities) and net errors in the estimates.
Note:
Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, scale by scale, the annual increments which have been awarded to primary and secondary school teachers in each year since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: Incremental salary scales for teachers are set out annually in Burnham documents or amending orders, copies of which are available in the Library. Annual percentage pay increases as applied to these incremental scales since 1979 are as follows:

	Scale 1 per cent.	*Scale 2 per cent.*	*Scale 3 per cent.*	*Scale 4 per cent.*	*Senior Teacher per cent.*	*Deputy Head per cent.*	*Head per cent.*
1979	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·3
*1980	34·0	34·0-35·1	34·0-35·1	34·0-36·3	35·1-38·0	34·0-40·3	35·1-45·0
1981	7·5	7·5	7·5	7·5	7·5	7·5	7·5
1982	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0	6·0
1983	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0
1984	5·1	5·1	5·1	5·1	5·1	5·1	5·1

* The increases for 1980 comprise two elements: the Clegg commission award ranging from 17 per cent. for the lowest paid teachers to 25 per cent. for the highest paid head teachers, and an arbitral award ranging from 14·5 per cent. for those receiving 17 per cent. from Clegg to 16 per cent. for those receiving 25 per cent.; giving compound increases in the range 34 to 45 per cent.

Deaf Children

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will explain a discrepancy between the figures for hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream schools collated by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers Working Group and those collected by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf; and if this discrepancy has any implications for the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers Working Group's recommendations.

Mr. Dunn: As the notes to the table in annex D to the advisory committee's report made clear, the figure for the number of hearing-impaired pupils in ordinary classes referred to those for whom a statement of special educational need would be appropriate under the Education Act 1981. The figure for "children in local schools" in the survey by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf is not comparable, since it included all pupils seen by peripatetic teachers of the deaf. The fact that the use of different criteria produces different results does not appear to alter the validity of the working group's recommendations.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional specialist support staff and resources are provided in mainstream schools which have deaf pupils; and what extra training is provided for the other staff.

Mr. Dunn: These matters are the responsibility of local education authorities. Information on them is not collected centrally.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there have been any responses in favour of the Advisory Committee on the Supply and

Education of Teachers Working Party's main recommendations to remove the mandatory requirement for a specialist qualification for teachers of the deaf and partially hearing and to phase out initial teacher training and post graduate certificate courses for specialist teaching of those children.

Mr. Dunn: There were very few responses in favour of removing the mandatory requirement for teachers of deaf and partially hearing pupils to have a specialist qualification. Of the respondents who commented on the recommendation that initial specialist teacher training courses should be replaced by in-service training, a majority supported ACSET's view.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers Working Party took into account the experiences of other countries with regard to specialist qualifications of teachers of deaf children.

Mr. Dunn: It was for ACSET to determine those matters relevant to its inquiry into teacher training and special educational needs. My right hon. Friend understands that ACSET did not take direct account of the experiences of other countries.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers Working Party consulted with any deaf or hearing-impaired children.

Mr. Dunn: It was for ACSET to determine how it conducted its review of teacher training for special education. I understand that the committee did not consult deaf or partially hearing children.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* deaf people and *(b)* teachers of deaf pupils were on the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers Working Group.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that there were no deaf people or teachers of deaf pupils on the working group whose members, collectively, had considerable experience relevant to the review of teacher training and special educational needs carried out by ACSET.

Sign Language

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that British sign language is introduced as a major language option in schools.

Mr. Dunn: There is considerable divergence of opinion among experts as to whether British sign language should be regarded as a language or a system of communication. In the circumstances, it would be inappropriate for my right hon. Friend to take a particular stance on its introduction into the school curriculum.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which mainstream schools and further education colleges have teachers or pupils who can use British sign language.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in descending order the cost of educating the average pupil in each local education authority.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. I. Bufton

Mrs. Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends answering the letter sent to him on 4 November 1984 by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston, concerning her constituent Mr. I Bufton.

Mr. Brooke: I replied to my hon. Friend on 6 March.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Dollar-Pound Exchange Rate

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the value of the pound sterling against the United States dollar, at six-monthly intervals from June 1979 to December 1984, and also the most up-to-date figure in March 1985.

Mr. Lawson: The information requested is as follows:

	*$/£ exchange rate**
June 1979	2·11
December 1979	2·20
June 1980	2·34
December 1980	2·35
June 1981	1·97
December 1981	1·91
June 1982	1·76
December 1982	1·62
June 1983	1·55
December 1983	1·44
June 1984	1·38
December 1984	1·19
March 1985†	1·07

* Monthly averages.
† Average of 1 and 4 March.

Inflation

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the rates of inflation for 1978-79 and in each subsequent year to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Lawson: The percentage changes in the retail prices index, financial year on previous financial year, are as follows:

	per cent.
1978-79	8·3
1979-80	15·8
1980-81	16·3
1981-82	11·5
1982-83	7·1
1983-84	4·7

Industrial Society

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any information was provided by the Inland Revenue to the Industrial Society during 1984 concerning the incomes of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. and learned Member have a reply as soon as possible.

£1 Coin

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the specification of the material used in the manufacture of the £1 coin.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The material used in the £1 coin was specified by a royal proclamation dated 10 February 1982 which stated:

"A new coin of mixed metal of the denomination of one pound shall be made, being a coin of . . . a standard composition of seventy per centum copper, five and one half per centum nickel and twenty-four and one half per centum zinc.

In the making of the said mixed metal coin a remedy (that is a variation from the standard composition specified above) shall be allowed of an amount not exceeding the following, that is to say; a variation from the said standard composition of two per centum copper, three quarters per centum nickel and two per centum zinc."

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the precise dimensions of the £1 coin, together with the accepted tolerances.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The precise dimensions and tolerances of the £1 coin were specified by royal proclamation dated 10 February 1982, which stated:

"A new coin of mixed metal of the denomination of one pound shall be made, being a coin of a standard weight of 9·5 grammes, a standard diameter of 22·5 millimetres . . . and being circular in shape.

In the making of the said mixed metal coin a remedy (that is a variation from the standard weight, diameter . . . specified above) shall be allowed of an amount not exceeding the following, that is to say: A variation from the said standard weight of an amount per coin (measured as the average of a sample of not more than one kilo-gramme of the coin) of 0·05 grammes; and a variation from the said standard diameter of 0·1 millimetres per coin."

There is no legal edge thickness tolerance, but for the convenience of the vending industry, the Royal Mint has established tolerances which allow for 99·7 per cent. of coins to fall within the thickness range 2·95 to 3·25 millimetres.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he takes to satisfy himself that £1 coins have been, and are being, made to the specification; and if he will describe the procedures involved.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A provision is made under the Trial of the Pyx (Amendment) Order 1983 for the annual independent testing of the legal specifications and tolerances of coins manufactured by the Royal Mint.

In addition, the Royal Mint has a quality assurance department and operates an inspection procedure which includes the monitoring of edge thickness.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about variations in the size of different £1 coins.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Royal Mint has received several representations that vending machines are not accepting certain £1 coins. The royal Mint has asked for sample coins for examination and has thus far received three.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequ what is the difference in size or tolerances of the Scottis £1 coin as compared with the original design.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There is no difference in the size o tolerances of £1 coins of different types.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequ what information he has as to the incidence o counterfeiting involving £1 coins.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since the £1 coin was issued on 2 April 1983, the Royal Mint has received 162 counterfe coins for investigation which, compared to the number o £1 coins in circulation, is negligible. The majority of thes counterfeits are easily detected.

Allowances

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Chancellor of th Exchequer if he will consider retaining the system of first year allowances on plant and machinery fo unincorporated businesses at 75 per cent. and the 10 pe cent. allowance on agricultural buildings.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply a soon as possible.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many couples have elected for separate taxation an assessment in each of the years since this option wa introduced.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: Estimates of the number of couples electing fo separate taxation of wife's earnings from 1975-76 are a follows. I regret that estimates for 1972-73 to 1974-75 ar not available. No regular survey is made of the number electing for separate assessment but the best estimate i about 20,000 couples. It is possible for couples to make both elections: no estimate can be made of the numbe who do so.

Elections for separate taxation of wife's earnings

	Thousands
1975-76	210
1976-77	240
1977-78	140
1978-79	120
1979-80	125
1980-81	125
1981-82	160
1982-83	200
*1983-84	170
*1984-85	160

*Provisional.

Extra-statutory Concessions

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consolidate all Her Majesty's Customs and Excise extra-statutory concessions into one publication, specifying in each case the fiscal year in which each concession was introduced.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *57*]: This suggestion is being taken into account in the current review of the arrangements for publishing information on extra-statutory concessions.

Non-transferable Tax Allowance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what single rate of non-transferable tax allowance could be introduced at an extra cost to the Exchequer of £1·5 billion if all the existing personal allowances were abolished and married couples were taxed as individuals.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985]: An increase in the single allowance of £770 to £2,775 would have a direct revenue cost of about £1·5 billion in a full year at 1984-85 levels of income, if all other allowances were abolished. The estimate assumes that husbands and wives would be taxed as individuals and unused allowances would not be transferable between them. It has also been assumed that tax reliefs, including mortgage interest relief, continue to apply.

Family Taxation and Benefits

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what the effect would be, excluding those on the higher rates of tax, on *(a)* the numbers of working families with overall marginal tax rates of 50 per cent. or more and *(b)* the numbers of working families with marginal tax rates of 75 per cent. or more of (i) raising child benefit over and above indexation whilst keeping personal allowances in line with indexation, (ii) raising personal allowances over and above indexation with child benefit being increased in line with indexation only, (iii) raising both child benefit and personal allowances by the same percentage increase, assuming in all three cases a fiscal adjustment of £1·5 billion; and whether he will also show the amounts of increase in allowances and child benefit that would occur under each of these policies.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

All three options quoted would reduce the number of working families with a marginal tax rate of 75 per cent., or more, by about 10,000 to 20,000 although options (ii) and (iii) would result in some of these families still having a marginal tax rate of over 50 per cent. The effect would be similar but less marked for those with marginal tax rates of 50 per cent. or more, but it is not possible to be more precise.

The table shows the amounts of increases above indexation in allowances and child benefits that have been assumed for each option.

Options	*Amount of increase above indexation*			
	Married man's tax allowance	*Single person's tax allowance*	*Child benefit*	*One-parent benefit*
	(£ year)	*(£ year)*	*£ (week)*	*£ (week)*
(i)	—	—	3·00	1·85
(ii)	250	160	—	—
(iii)	210	140	0·45	0·30

ENVIRONMENT

House Building (Bolton)

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the housing starts and housing completions in Bolton since 1974 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Annual figures of housing starts and completions in Bolton are in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics":

	Number
1974	33
1975	37
1976	41
1977	45
1978	49
1979 revised	59
1980 revised	59
1981	61
1982	65
1983	69

Figures for January to September 1984 are in the latest issue No. 72. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Vacant Urban Land

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the extent of vacant urban land suitable for housing in the south-east.

Mr. Macfarlane: There is no overall figure available in the form requested, but the local authorities, in updating their development plans and undertaking joint land availability studies with the House Builders Federation, are continually reviewing the need for and provision of land for housing both in and outside urban areas.

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of urban vacant land have been released for development as a result of orders made under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mr. Macfarlane: The total area of land subject to directions made under section 98 of Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 is just over 30 acres. Tenders are currently being considered by three of the landowning bodies concerned, but to date no sale has been completed.

Housing Needs (South-East)

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current projection of housing needs in the south-east between now and the end of the century; and how this differs from the projections made in 1980.

Sir George Young: Such projections have not been made in the form implied, for the reasons explained in my replies to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 1 March at column 296.

I am, however, awaiting with interest the outcome of the studies currently being undertaken by SERPLAN which are expected to cover the problem of future demand for housing land.

Central Berkshire Structure Plan

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with local employers concerning the central Berkshire structure plan.

Mr. Macfarlane: None. The Berkshire county council is currently considering proposals for a replacement Berkshire structure plan. It is the duty of the county council to review its structure plans and to undertake public consultation in respect of any proposals it makes for alteration or replacement. Following submission to my right hon. Friend of any such proposals, representations may be made to him, and local persons, including employers, may be invited to participate in an examination in public into the proposals.

Housing and Development (South-East)

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the release of vacant land in urban areas for housing and development in the south-east.

Mr. Macfarlane: As was emphasised in my Department's circular on land for housing (15/84), published last year, the Government attach the greatest importance to making full and effective use of vacant land within urban areas, and I would like to see more progress on this front.

We are taking steps to ensure the release of land on land registers and are giving high priority to the reclamation of derelict land in urban areas. However, as the circular points out, most new housing will continue to be on new sites.

Land Releases

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many orders he has made under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 instructing local authorities and other public bodies to release land on the Land Register.

Mr. Macfarlane: Under the powers conferred upon him by section 98 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, my right hon. Friend has directed four local authorities to take steps for the disposal of their interest in plots of land entered on the land register.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for assistance are currently being considered by the trustees of the national heritage memorial fund; and what is the total value of such applications under consideration in each of the following categories *(a)* buildings, *(b)* art objects, paintings etc. *(c)* manuscripts and archives, *(d)* industrial history, transport and maritime history, *(e)* scenic and amenity land and *(f)* nature conservation and land of scientific interest.

Mr. Macfarlane: I understand the trustees of the national heritage memorial fund currently have 29 applications under consideration, made up as follows:

Category	*As*
	£ m
(a) Buildings	
(b) Art objects, paintings, etc.	
(c) Manuscripts and archives	
(d) Industrial history, transport and maritime history	
(e) Scenic and amenity land	
(f) Nature conservation and land of scientific interest	

Rate Capping (Personal Files)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State f Environment (1) why his Department is keepin containing information on *(a)* the personal, *(b* financial and *(c)* the matrimonial circumstances of L councillors on the councils that are, or are going to b capped; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why he has authorised the gathering of inform on *(a)* the personal, *(b)* the financial and *(c* matrimonial circumstances of Labour councillors councils that are, or are going to be, rate capped; what sources the information is being gathered; and will make a statement;

(3) on what authority the information abou personal, financial and matrimonial circumstanc Labour councillors in councils that are, or are going rate capped, which is being collected by him, has passed to Conservative Central Office.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No such files are in exis nor have any arrangements been made to collect information.

South-East (Office Supply and Demand)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State f Environment what are the terms of reference objectives of his Department's research on office s and demand in London and the south-east.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Department is commissi research on the operation of the market for accommodation in London and the South East. Cen that research is the relationship between the dema and the supply of office accommodation. The obje are to identify the characteristics and determinan office supply and availability, including the influ upon the office development process, and to id obstacles to the efficient operation of the market.

Local Government Bill

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State f Environment what response his Department has ma the letter dated 16 November 1984, from the Assoc of London Borough Planning Officers regarding u development plan proposals in the Local Governmen

Mr. Macfarlane: My officials wrote to the Assoc of London Borough Planning Officers on 23 January offering to meet it to discuss the points which it had in its letter of 16 November 1984.

GLC (Property Auctions)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State f Environment why the Greater London council was st from selling, by auction, three properties at the Islington junction.

Sir George Young: On 10 October 1984 the GLC was asked to supply certain information required to enable my right hon. Friend to give proper consideration to its application for consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 to dispose of five properties at this junction. It was understood that disposal in the manner proposed could prejudice early consideration of road improvement works. I regret to say that to date the GLC has not responded.

London Planning Commission

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconcile the figures given in answers on 21 June 1984, *Official Report*, column *233*, and 23 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *317*, respectively, about the number of London borough councils which had expressed support for the proposed London planning commission.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government wrote to the hon. Member on 28 January 1985, confirming that the second of the two answers was correct.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which professional bodies have written to his Department expressing support for his planning proposals for London in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Association of London Borough Planning Officers indicated some support for the Government's revised proposals for unitary development plans as an improvement to their earlier proposals for separate structure and local plans, but has expressed detailed reservations about the arrangements for the preparation of strategic guidance.

Metropolitan Green Belt

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of the metropolitan green belt land have been released for development purposes by Government Departments and by statutory undertakers over the last 10 years.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not available.

London Boroughs (Strategic Planning)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has sought outside his Department as to the level of detail to be embodied in his proposed strategic planning guidance for the London borough councils.

Mr. Macfarlane: No specific advice has been sought, but my right hon. Friend published proposals in his consultation paper and in the subsequent revised proposals paper and he will be guided by the advice of the London Planning Commission and by the views of the London boroughs on the detail of any strategic guidance he may issue.

London Boroughs (Green Belt Development)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call in for his decision every planning application for development in the green belt which London borough councils propose to approve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: No. There are no proposals for a change in policy.

Government Car Service (Parking Offences)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the reasons for a number of cars belonging to the Government car service being parked in such a manner as to be booked for parking offences outside the Welsh Office at 9.30 am on Tuesday 5 March.

Sir George Young: Three GCS cars attended passengers at the Welsh office on 5 March after 9 am. Traffic wardens spoke to the drivers but, as no parking offences were committed, no parking tickets were issued.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire on Friday 13 February, *Official Report*, column *300-1*, if he will publish full details of the scale and conditions of eligibility for grants under the homes insulation scheme in the *Official Report*.

Sir George Young: Full details of the homes insulation scheme 1984, the scale of grants available and conditions of eligibility are contained in Department of the Environment circular 13/84, copies of which are available in the Library.

Control of Pollution Act 1974

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environmentif he will place a copy of the review of the financial implications of the implementation of sections 12 to 14 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in the Library.

Mr. Gow: There is no review document as such, but I will place in the Library as soon as it is available a statement summing up the information obtained.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement sections 12 to 14 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend is considering this in the light of the financial implications.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the current situation of the Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Member Governments of the Association of South East Asian Nations keep us closely informed of their views about the current Vietnamese offensive in Cambodia. A representative of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front called on officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 16 January. We have made clear our deep concern to the Vietnamese Government bilaterally and jointly with European Community partners.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has

received in respect of military or financial support given to Vietnamese forces by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: None. We deplore Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and Soviet military and other assistance which permits this. The United Kingdom, with the overwhelming majority of the international community, wishes to see the total withdrawal of foreign forces from Cambodia, internationally supervised elections and the creation of an independent neutral and non-aligned Cambodia.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current refugee problem in Thailand as a result of Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia, giving the current numbers of refugees; what representations have been made about the matter by Her Majesty's Government and to whom; and what he proposes to do about the situation.

Mr. Rifkind: We strongly deplore the suffering caused to Cambodian civilians, some 240,000 of whom have recently fled to Thailand, and have so informed the Vietnamese authorities. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces announced in another place on 27 February, at column 965, a special grant of £250,000 to the United Nations border relief operation in addition to £250,000 already given this year. We supported a recent European Community pledge of food aid for refugees in Thailand. We are monitoring the situation closely.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the course of his official visit to Thailand, he will establish contact with any of the forces resisting Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to his question of 5 March at column 436. We have periodic contact with the non-Communist Cambodian resistance groups, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) told the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 11 February at column 31, we provide modest assistance to them, solely of a humanitarian nature.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what talks he proposes to have, and with whom, about sanctions against Vietnam following its aggression in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We are in frequent contact with Western partners and members of the Association of South East Asian Nations about policy towards Vietnam in the light of its continuing occupation of Cambodia. We firmly adhere to the policy announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 3 July 1979 not to provide aid to Vietnam and, where necessary, encourage others to do likewise.

Cruise Missiles (Sweden and Finland)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to Sweden and Finland as a result of threats by those countries to shoot down North Atlantic Treaty Organisation cruise missiles passing over their territory.

Mr. Rifkind: None.

Israel (Arms)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Fo Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the ba Majesty's Government on the export of arms following that country's invasion of Lebanon maintain the ban until Israel withdraws from the invaded and occupied in Jordan, Egypt and Syr he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Restrictions on arms sales to Is imposed following the Israeli invasion of Le 1982. These restrictions can be reviewed a withdrawal is completed. The Israeli occupation c Jordanian and Egyptian territory in 1967 took different circumstances and no such restrictions v imposed.

Mr. Yasser Arafat

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Fo Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the ran Ministers in Her Majesty's Government, or of in European Economic Community member Gov representing the European Economic Commun have met Mr. Yasser Arafat in an official capac

Mr. Rifkind: No Minister in Her M Government has had an official meeting with Mr Arafat. The then Netherlands Foreign Minister, der Klaauw, met Mr. Arafat in his presidency ca 17 April 1981, during a round of contacts with th to the Arab-Israel dispute. Full information r Ministers of other EC Governments is not availa

New Zealand Farmers

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for For Commonwealth Affairs what foreign policy objec envisaged by providing New Zealand farmers wi of access to United Kingdom and European E Community markets; and if he will make a state

Mr. Rifkind: The old and close ties that United Kingdom and New Zealand are too ev require exposition.

The Community recognises that New Z economy is dependent upon dairy and sheepmeat and that access to Community markets is essenti At the time of our accession, a commitment was t given to allow continuing access to the United K market for New Zealand's butter on special ter commitment was embodied in protocol 18 to our Accession to the Community. The current arran run to 1988, and there is provision for the Co decide on continuing access thereafter. For sheep a derogation of its GATT rights, New Zealand a limit its sendings in return for which the Co halved the GATT-bound tariff to 10 per ce undertook not to use export subsidies to increase share of world sheepmeat trade.

Our continuing objective is to ensure t Community honours its specific commitments Zealand, in accordance with its international obl

ANZUS Treaty

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statment on the implication for the United Kingdom and the Western Alliance of New Zealand's decision to opt out of her obligations under ANZUS; and what steps he proposes to take.

Mr. Rifkind: Although the United Kingdom is not a signatory to the ANZUS treaty, we view with concern any disagreement between its members, all of whom are our friends and allies. We are also concerned at the effect of New Zealand policy on ship visits. We have made our views clear both to the New Zealand Government and to the others involved and are ready to take any opportunity to contribute to a resolution of these difficulties.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to decide on the possibility of appointing official observers to the forthcoming elections in El Salvador; and what considerations he is taking into account in making his decision.

Mr. Renton: We shall announce a decision once we have received and considered an invitation from the Salvadorean Government.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which countries have appointed official observers to the forthcoming elections in El Salvador; and what are their terms of reference.

Mr. Renton: We are continuing active consultations with our European partners. We do not yet know the details of other countries' decisions regarding official observers.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Rape Case (Cardiff)

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General what, pursuant to his answer of 23 November regarding withdrawal of proceedings against a man for rape at Cardiff magistrates' court on 5 November, were the essential elements of the alleged offence in respect of which the death of the complainant rendered the evidence insufficient; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: In the absence of evidence from the complainant, admissible against the defendant under the rules of evidence, the prosecution could not have established the following essential ingredients of the offence of rape: *(a)* Sexual intercourse with the complainant; *(b)* The absence of consent; *(c)* The requisite mens rea.

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General whether in the case of the man against whom proceedings for rape were withdrawn at Cardiff magistrates' court on 5 November, any statement had been made by the accused.

The Solicitor-General: The accused answered questions put to him by police officers and also made a written statement under caution.

Social Security Commissioners (Decisions)

Mr. Clay asked the Attorney-General how m complete editions of Social Security Commission decisions have been published during the past year whom any such editions were made available; what the total cost of publishing such editions; what steps taken to make such editions available to organisation individuals who may wish to purchase them; and if he make a statement on the publication of such editions in future.

The Solicitor-General: Complete editions of decisions are not published. A selection of the m significant decisions is made by the Chief Commissio and these are published by Her Majesty's Stationery Of as reported decisions. Each reported decision is availa to the public from Her Majesty's Stationery Office in first instance separately in loose-leaf form. Bo volumes covering one or more years are produced la In 1984, 97 loose-leaf reported decisions were publis and are thus available for purchase by the public. Th will be included in the next bound volume. Her Majes Stationery Office does not operate a job costing system cannot identify separate costs relating to individual tit The arrangements for publication will be kept un review.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Foulkes asked the Attorney-General if he will all occasions in the last three years when an alle contravention of the Official Secrets Act was referre him or to the Director of Public Prosecutions; and w action was taken in each case.

The Solicitor-General: No. It would not be righ make information public about cases in which there have been reason to suspect that criminal offences have been committed, whether or not offences under Official Secrets Acts, but in which, because prosecution was in the end instituted, the question of guilt or innocence of the persons concerned was publicly determined.

GCHQ

Mr. Foulkes asked the Attorney-General on w occasions in the last three years he or the Director of Pu Prosecutions has discussed possible prosecutions under Official Secrets Act 1911 of staff of *(a)* Governm communications headquarters and *(b)* Northwood; with whom.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to reply to his earlier question today on a similar matte

DEFENCE

European Defence Co-operation

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defe if he will define the respective roles of the North Atla Treaty Organisation Eurogroup and Western Euro Union in promoting European co-operation in defen

Mr. Stanley: The Western European Union and Eurogroup have complementary roles to play in promo European defence co-operation within the ov

framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The Eurogroup provides a forum for discussions between Defence Ministers and for practical defence co-operation between European members of the Alliance. The reactivated Western European Union affords foreign and Defence Ministers of member countries valuable opportunities for joint political debate on and further impetus towards improved European security co-operation.

RAF Molesworth

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence what costs were incurred in the erection of the 7½ mile barbed wire fence around the RAF Molesworth cruise missile base.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 26 February last at column 156.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil contractors were involved in the erection of the barbed wire fences at the RAF Molesworth base and in the provision of the observation platforms and perimeter lighting for the purpose of assisting Ministry of Defence guards.

Mr. Lee: The temporary fence, observation platforms and perimeter lighting were erected by the Royal Engineers. The permanent weldmesh fence was erected by contractors and involved a labour force of some 160.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current rate of expenditure per week on the security operations at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *208*]: This information is not kept in the form requested, but I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance he has requested from civilian police forces to assist in security operations at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *208*]: Policing operations on the Ministry of Defence land at RAF Molesworth are the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence Police. No assistance has been sought to date from other police forces in carrying out these duties, although the chief constable of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary was fully briefed in advance on the operations at RAF Molesworth to enable him to discharge his responsibilities outside the base and on public roads, up to the perimeter of the Ministry of Defence land. There has since been close consultation and co-operation on policing matters of joint concern.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of his Department's police are currently involved in security operations at RAF Molesworth;

(2) how many Army and Royal Air Force personnel are currently assigned to the security operation at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1985, c. *208*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhi February 1985 at column 163. It is not our security reasons, to give the actual number o Defence police or service personnel engage duties at specific locations.

Sexual Offences Act 1967

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary Defence if he has any intention to bring forwa to extend the provisions of the Sexual Offenc to members of the armed forces.

Mr. Lee: No. Service life is often in la gender communities and in conditions in important to prevent abuse of author circumstances have been considered by Governments to be sufficiently different from justify the continuing proscription of homose Armed Forces. Parliament reaffirmed this pos the passage of the Armed Forces Act 1981. Th no subsequent change of policy.

Service Personnel (Rights and Restric

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary Defence what guidance he issues to servic women about the rights and restrictions whi apply to them regarding *(a)* the membership parties, attendance at party branch meetings involvement in party affairs, *(b)* the me campaign and pressure groups, attendance a and pressure group internal meetings involvement in campaign and pressure gro affairs, *(c)* the membership of trade unions, a union branch meetings and active involveme affairs, *(d)* participation in political marches, tions, rallies, public meetings and the signin petitions and *(e)* writing letters to the press on related to defence policy and (ii) subjects of ge interest other than defence policy; and if h proposals to vary or to carry out a review of and regulations.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend, the Parliament Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will hon. Member.

Trident

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for De is the current expected date of entry into ser Trident missile system and its expected lifetim will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The United Kingdom Trident planned to enter service in the mid 1990s and in service until at least 2020.

Air Crew (Drugs)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of Defence which benzodiazepine preparations a air crew employed by his Department.

Mr. Lee: The only benzodiazepine preparati air crew in all three services is temazepam.

WALES

Industrial Development

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve Wales's profile in terms of attracting industrial development.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There are always improvements to be made. However, the fact is that 47 new overseas companies have decided to locate in Wales since I established WINvest in April 1983 as the focal point for our efforts to attract industrial development. This represents about 24 per cent. of the new projects secured for the United Kingdom during this time. In the same period 24 investment projects by overseas companies that have already chosen Wales as a location have been announced. Taken together this represents investment in excess of £300 million. Nearly 400 applications for regional selective assistance were received by my Department in 1984; 16,500 inquiries were received by my Department's small firms centre; over 1·8 million sq ft of factory space was let; and the WDA/private sector Welsh venture capital fund was launched in January. All of this suggests that Wales is attracting, and continues to attract, a high share of mobile projects and that the advantages that Wales has to offer as an industrial location for projects new to Wales and for indigenous growth are well understood and appreciated. Apart from its other activities WINvest will also be participating fully in the forthcoming Britain Means Business campaign.

Contaminated Land

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has undertaken a review of the extent of contaminated land in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A review of contaminated land has been conducted in Wales by Liverpool university on behalf of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency. A report was published in March 1984 and I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

Baglan Industrial Estate

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many factories have been let on the Baglan industrial estate and how many are still unlet; and how many visits were made to the estate by interested industrialists in the last six months.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Of the nine factories on the Baglan industrial park, one has so far been let, six are currently under offer and two are available for letting. Comprehensive records of visits made by interested industrialists to individual industrial estates are not maintained, but it is estimated that 35 visits have been made to Baglan industrial park by prospective tenants in the last six months.

Engineering Industry

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how may persons are now employed in general engineering in Wales; and what were the numbers in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The published series annual figures for employees in the metal go engineering and vehicles industries (Division 3 SIC(for 1979-81 related to June. For consistency a June s is therefore given for the whole period covered by question:

Month	*Number*
June 1979	120,000
June 1980	114,000
June 1981	98,000
June 1982	93,000
June 1983	88,000
June 1984	86,000

Source: Department of Employment.

Women (Unemployment)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State Wales how many women in Wales were regist unemployed in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1982 and *(c)* January 1 and what were the figures in percentage terms in each c

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number regist unemployed in Wales in January 1979 was 28,090 a of 6·5 per cent. and in January 1982 51,246 a rate of per cent. Information available for January 1985 relat claimants, of whom there were 53,809, a rate of 12· cent.

Mid-Wales Development

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State Wales what was the budget of Mid-Wales Developme 1983-84 and 1984-85; what is the budget for 1985-86 if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The budget for Development Board for Rural Wales was £9,439,0(1983-84 and £9,672,000 in 1984-85. The budget 1985-86, which is subject to parliamentary approval, be published in the Supply Estimates on 19 March.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for W how many representations he has received from mem of the public with regard to the Government's prop to limit the range of drugs available on the National H Service.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A total of 452 representations been received from members of the public and Members on behalf of constituents. 77 of representations have been from doctors.

PRIME MINISTER

USA (Visit)

Q12. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister wh she will make a statement on her recent visit to the U States of America.

Q44. **Mr. Malone** asked the Prime Minister if she make a statement about her recent visit to Washing

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friends t statement I made to the House on 26 February, at col 173-86.

Intelligence Accountability

Q19. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will set up a committee of inquiry to examine and report on the problems of intelligence accountability to Parliament.

The Prime Minister: No. I am satisfied with existing arrangements for the control of the security and intelligence agencies.

Trades Union Congress

Q62. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Prime Minister when she next proposes to meet the leaders of the Trades Union Congress.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Q110. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about President Reagan's strategic defence initiative.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 26 February, at columns 173-86.

European Community Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* the overall limit which has been set on the Budget for 1985 and the base percentage used for putting a ceiling on agricultural spending.

The Prime Minister: The Community has no budget for 1985. The draft budget was rejected by the European Parliament on 13 December and the Commission has not yet put forward new proposals. The financial guideline for agriculture, which is part of the budgetary discipline system, applies for the first time to expenditure in the 1986 financial year. The Commission's 1985 price fixing proposals have therefore been drawn up in accordance with the financial guideline.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the European Economic Community has now agreed to a corrective mechanism for budgetary imbalances concerning an increase in the value added tax contribution under own resources; and whether the Government will require the money lent to the European Economic Community by way of an advance to be repaid out of savings within the present financial ceiling in the current year.

The Prime Minister: The European Community agreed the mechanism for correcting budgetary imbalances at the Fontainebleau European Council. Detailed discussion of the text of the new own resources decision which will implement the mechanism is continuing.

Advances of own resources collected by member states on behalf of the Community are recovered from the sums paid on the normal dates in the current year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what were the conditions referred to in the last part of her reply dated 29 March 1984, *Official Report*, column 242, concerning the proposal to increase the value added tax contribution to 1·4 per cent.; how many of these conditions have now been met; and whether she will update the expected yield from an increase in the value added tax contribution to 1·4 per cent.

The Prime Minister: The conditions to which I referred, as I said when I reported to the House on the outcome of the March 1984 European Council, were that there should be effective control of agricultural and other spending and that there should be a fair sharing of the United Kingdom budgetary burden.

The Council of Ministers adopted on 4 December its conclusions on implementing the system of budgetary discipline to control agricultural and other spending. The Fontainebleau European Council agreed a new system for abating our contributions. Detailed implementation of this and other aspects of the increase in the Community's VAT own resources is still under discussion. We shall not ask the House to approve them until we are satisfied on all aspects.

Leaving aside the United Kingdom abatement, on the basis of the 1984 figures, an increase in the VAT ceiling from 1 to 1·4 per cent. would add some £3·5 billion to the maximum amount of revenue available to the Community, an increase of around 23 per cent. After taking account of the United Kingdom abatement, the increase would be lower, probably in the range 15 to 20 per cent.

Engagements

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Labour Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Prime Minister what was the total number of men, women and young people unemployed in each year from December 1978 to December 1984 in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The following table shows the information requested, in respect of total unemployed claimants. Comparisons are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions by which some men, mainly aged 60 years and over, no longer need to sign on in order to receive supplementary benefit or national insurance credits.

The second table shows the number of unemployed registrants aged under 18 years for January of each year from 1979 to 1982 (not available for December) and the number of unemployed claimants under 18 years for January of each year from 1982.

Unemployed Claimants

(Thousand)

	Scotland		England		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
December 1978	111·0	49·1	723·9	256·6	59·2	22·2	41·1	17·1
December 1979	113·6	53·8	690·2	264·5	54·7	23·8	42·0	18·2
December 1980	168·5	74·8	1,198·1	440·4	93·2	36·3	62·3	26·3
December 1981	215·1	88·5	1,621·3	579·2	116·5	42·3	72·3	28·9
December 1982	235·7	97·5	1,822·1	654·8	128·5	46·0	81·6	30·7
December 1983	230·0	102·6	1,730·6	729·1	120·1	48·6	86·2	32·2
December 1984	237·7	105·2	1,780·2	796·9	127·9	52·8	86·7	32·1

Unemployed Young People (Under 18 Years)

	Scotland	*England*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Unemployed Resistrants				
January 1979	22,373	78,003	7,464	4,958
January 1980	22,438	76,177	7,041	5,111
January 1981	30,623	148,893	11,259	9,396
January 1982	33,138	175,262	12,145	9,525
October 1982	30,608	218,772	13,596	11,037
Unemployed Claimants				
October 1982	30,446	199,633	13,815	9,000
January 1983	34,334	169,284	11,859	6,268
January 1984	33,669	153,809	10,713	6,102
January 1985	31,966	149,901	10,766	5,045

Oil and Gas Revenue and Unemployment Benefit

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Prime Minister if she will cause to be published in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year between 1979 and 1984 *(a)* the amount of revenue received by the Treasury in respect of North sea oil and gas, *(b)* the amount paid out in respect of unemployment benefit and *(c)* the percentage figure which *(b)* forms of *(a)* in these years.

The Prime Minister: The figures for the financial years 1977-78 to 1983-84 are as follows:

	(a) North sea tax take £ *million*	*(b) Unemployment benefit* £ *million*	*(c) (b) as a percentage of (a) percentage*
1977-78	238	629	264·3
1978-79	562	632	112·5
1979-80	2,334	653	28·0
1980-81	3,882	1,280	33·0
1981-82	6,461	1,702	26·3
1982-83	7,761	1,500	19,3
1983-84	8,821	1,497	17·0

Channels Islands

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister whether the circumstances in which Her Majesty's Government will intervene in the internal workings of the Channel Islands include taking steps to promote better legal administrations on the islands.

The Prime Minister: The Channel Islands are internally self-governing dependencies of the Crown. I am not aware of any problems arising from their legal administration which would justify the exceptional exercise of the United Kingdom's paramount power to intervene in their internal affairs.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fingerprints

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he assesses the cost-effectiveness of fingerprint identification by the Metropolitan police *(a)* by conventional methods and *(b)* by the automatic fingerprint recognition system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Fingerprint identification is used by the National Identification Bureau to confirm the identity of arrested persons and by the Metropolitan police to assist the detection of crime. The cost and accuracy of the present methods of fingerprint identification are now under review as part of a study of the case for extending the use of automatic fingerprint recognition technology in the police service.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional fingerprint identifications beyond that which would otherwise have been obtained have been made by the automatic fingerprint recognition system of the Metropolitan police since its inception; if he will break the figure down by category of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police automatic fingerprint recognition system has been in use since September 1984. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, despite a reduced volume of work, identifications have increased by 215 (19 per cent.) between September 1984 and January 1985 compared with the same period in 1983-84.

Information about the numbers of identifications by offence is not readily available but most offences were of burglary, robbery, theft and allied crimes.

Private Security Vans

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were instituted in the last 12 months for which figures are available against the drivers and occupants of private security vans for breach of traffic legislation.

Mr. Mellor: The types of proceedings specified are not separately identifiable in the information collected centrally on court proceedings.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his officials have had with the operators of private security firms about their adherence to traffic regulations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None. Enforcement of road traffic law, which applies equally to private security vehicles and drivers as to others, is the responsibility of the chief officers of police.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends bringing into force the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The first stage in the implementation of the Act took place on 1 January 1985. The provisions that came into effect on that date included section 106, which requires arrangements to be made in each police area for obtaining the views of the community on policing, certain miscellaneous provisions which it was convenient to bring into effect in advance of the major parts of the Act, and certain provisions of section 1 necessary to continue existing stop and search powers in those parts of the country which had hitherto exercised such powers under local legislation (and applying only to those areas).

The second stage of implementation will principally include part IX of the Act which establishes the Police Complaints Authority and other changes to the police complaints system. It has been necessary to defer the start of part IX a little beyond 1 April, in order to assist the consideration by the Police Advisory Board of the draft regulations needed to introduce the new scheme.

The third stage will continue the outstanding provisions of parts I to VIII—with the exception of subsections (11) to (14) of section 37, which are dependent upon provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 not yet in force, and section 60, which provides for the tape recording of police interviews with suspects and which will be subject to a separate programme of implementation in the light of the progress of the field trials now taking place in various police areas.

The date for the third stage of implementation to which my right hon. and learned Friend has asked forces to work is 1 January 1986, which is also the date on which he proposes to ask Parliament to agree that the four codes of practice which section 66 requires him to issue shall come into force.

Entry Clearance Applications

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of applications for entry clearance into the United Kingdom submitted by citizens from *(a)* former British Commonwealth countries and *(b)* present British Commonwealth countries were turned down in each single year since 1979.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates only to countries in the Indian sub-continent, and is given in the table below.

Refusal rate for all applications† for entry clearance to the United Kingdom*

Percentage

	Parkistan	*Bangladesh*	*India*
1979	27	27	10
1980	23	27	10
1981	22	25	8
1982	27	35	13
1983	27	50	16
‡1984	24	41	13

* Applications refused initially as a percentage of applications decided (i.e. refused initially or granted initially or on appeal)

† Applications for entry clearance for immediate settlement, for entry as husbands or fiances, students, visitors, etc. The refusal rates will be affected by the proportion of applications in the various categories.

‡ First three quarters of the year; fourth quarter figures will become available next week.

Prisons (Babies)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many babies were refused a place in the mother and baby units at Holloway, Styal and Askham Grange prisons in 1983 and 1984, respectively; what were the reasons for the refusal; and what subsequently happened to the babies.

Mr. Mellor: In 1983, four babies were refused admission to the unit at Holloway, two because of the length of their mothers' sentences and two because the unit was full. Two of the babies were taken into care, one remained with its grandmother and one remained with an aunt.

In 1984, three babies were refused admission to the unit at Holloway, one because of the length of the mother's sentence and two because the unit was full. Two babies remained with their grandparents and one remained with a friend of the mother.

There is no record of any babies being refused admission to the units at Styal or Askham Grange during 1983 or 1984.

Murder (Sentences)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recommendations for minimum periods of *(a)* 20 years or more and *(b)* 25 years or more have been made under section 1(2) of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965.

Mr. Mellor: As at 31 December 1984, the information in respect of England and Wales was as follows:

(a) 67 (excluding those in b)

(b) 48

Organ Transplants

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance his Department issues to coroners concerning approval for the removal of *(a)* kidneys and *(b)* other organs for transplant purposes;

(2) whether he has received any complaints relating to any coroner concerning approval for the removal of *(a)* kidneys and *(b)* other organs for transplant purposes.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office offers guidance to coroners by means of Home Office circulars. Four such

circulars (numbers 182/1961, 65/1977, 172/1977 and 44/1983) relating to transplant surgery have been issued, in the years shown in the references. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. We have recently received two complaints, both relating to one coroner, concerning approval for the removal of kidneys.

Crime Watch

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to chief constables about the advice given by them to crime watch or anti-crime organisations being run in certain towns by private citizens in respect of the degree of force used in making arrests of people whom they consider have committed a criminal offence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office crime prevention unit in collaboration with the Home Office crime prevention centre, Stafford, has issued guidance to police forces on the introduction of neighbourhood watch schemes. This stresses co-operation to prevent crime and speedy reporting of suspicious activities to the police and discourages vigilante style direct action.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to launch any publicity campaigns encouraging private citizens to establish their own crime watch or anti-crime organisations to assist police officers in those constabularies where police manning levels are understaffed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office crime prevention publicity campaign, which was launched in October 1984 in London and the Midlands, featured neighbourhood watch and we are providing all forces with publicity material they can use in support of such schemes.

Satellite Television

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which regions of the United Kingdom will be able to pick up satellite television broadcasts resulting from his proposals to amend the regulations governing the reception of satellite signals.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The reception of direct broadcasting by satellite is already authorised by the broadcast receiving licence. No such services yet exist which can be received in the United Kingdom. The Government have made no decision on whether to authorise the reception by individuals of low powered satellite services, but a number of cable operators are licensed to receive and distribute such services within the United Kingdom. The signals from satellites cover a very wide area and it is to be expected that all regions in the United Kingdom would be able to receive them.

Civil Defence

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make provision for civil defence in Swindon.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Civil Defence (Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 makes it a duty of county and district councils to make provision for civil defence in their areas. Local authorities have been asked to complete the plans required by 31 December 1985.

Policemen (Rates of Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether different special rates of pay are allocated to policemen employed to remove protesters and demonstrators on Ministry of Defence property from those awarded to officers policing miners' picket lines.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Immigration and Nationality

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester police as to the numbers of officers within the Greater Manchester police engaged full-time on immigration and nationality matters, their ranks and branch of the police force and a summary of their duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend understands from the chief constable of Greater Manchester that no police officers in the force are engaged full-time on immigration and nationality matters.

Public Disorder (Wolverhampton)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands concerning incidents of public disorder which occurred in Dudley street, Wolverhampton, on Wednesday 20 February; what was the cause and nature of the disturbance ; how many persons were involved; how many were arrested; whether there were any injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend understands from the chief constable of West Midlands that the disturbance in Dudley street on 20 February occurred when four officers were arresting two youths. A crowd of about 60 people tried to intervene and the disorder spread to a nearby store, before ending after a further 25 officers had arrived. There were 22 arrests and five police officers were injured. No injuries to members of the public were reported to the police.

Remanded Persons

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on each day in January and February 1985, how many prisoners remanded in custody at Her Majesty's remand centre, Risley, were not produced at magistrates' courts where they were due to appear as defendants.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on each day in January and February 1985, how many prisoners remanded in custody at Her Majesty's prison Strangeways, Manchester, were not produced at magistrates' courts where they were due to appear as defendants.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

Date	*Number*
January	
7	1

Date	Number
9	1
11	1
23	1
28	1
31	1
February	
12	1
13	1
18	2
19	1
22	1
27	1

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on each day in January and February 1985, how many prisoners remanded in custody at Her Majesty's prison, Brixton, were not produced at magistrates' courts where they were due to appear as defendants.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

Date	Number
January	
1	1
3	8
4	1
9	1
10	1
11	1
14	1
16	1
17	2
18	2
21	1
23	1
24	5
25	4
31	7
February	
1	7
4	3
5	3
7	10
8	3
11	4
12	4
13	3
14	8
15	6
18	3
19	6
20	5
21	6
22	5
25	2
26	2
27	5
28	5

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the relevant chief constables as to the number of persons injured in connection with the miners' dispute to the latest available date *(a)* from the beginning of the dispute and *(b)* since 1 January 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Up to 5 March, 1,392 police officers had been injured while carrying out duties connected with the dispute, 96 of these injuries occurring since 3 January. It is not possible to say how many members of the publ have been injured because not all such injuries are reporte to the police.

NOTES

(1) No figure is available for injuries sustained since 1 Janua itself.

(2) Where the same person has been injured on differe occasions, more than one entry will have been made in th figures given.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State fo the Home Department if he will call for reports from th relevant chief constables as to the number of perso charged in connection with the miners' dispute at the late available date *(a)* from the beginning of the dispute and *(b* since 1 January 1985; and if he will break each categor down by occupation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Up to 26 February, 7,879 persons ha been charged in connection with the dispute, 412 of thos being charged since 8 January. It is not possible from th information available centrally to give the occupations o those charged.

NOTES

(1) No figure is available for the number of those charged sinc 1 January itself.

(2) Where the same person has been the subject of charges o different occasions, more than one entry will have been made i the figures given.

Prisons (Diets)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for th Home Department what arrangements are made for th provision of vegan diets in Her Majesty's prisons; and i he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In accordance with guidance issued to al establishments inmates may, on application, be supplie with a vegan diet which is drawn from the vegetaria ration scale but with items supplemented and substitute as necessary.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Stat for the Home Department (1) what organisations hav been in receipt of funding from his Department fo research into alternatives to the use of animals fo experimental purposes in each of the last three years;

(2) what funding from his Department has bee available in each of the last three years for research int alternatives to the use of animals in experiments;

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress that ha been made in recent years in finding alternatives to the us of animals for experimental purposes; and whic individuals or organisations have been responsible for tha research;

(4) whether he has any plans to increase the funding b his Department for research into alternatives to the use o animals in experiments.

Mr. Mellor: The Government made a substantial gran this year to the fund for the replacement of animals i medical experiments for three projects, and my right hon and learned Friend announced on 16 January that th Government are paying £30,000 to the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare for a two-year project int improving the caging of laboratory rodents. We have a present no immediate plans for further Home Offic funding, but the situation is kept under review

Considerable progress has been made in many laboratories in finding and developing alternatives. I understand that more experiments are now performed using in vitro alternatives such as isolated organs, tissues or cells than whole animals. The Government welcome this progress. All licencees under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 are regularly reminded of the need to develop and use alternatives wherever practicable. Under the new legislation we plan to introduce to replace the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 procedures on animals will not be authorised if the results can satisfactorily be obtained by alternative means.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the 10 individuals or organisations which, in each of the last three years, have been issued with the greatest number of authorisations for the use of animals for experimental purposes.

Mr. Mellor: No authorisations under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 can be granted to organisations. I regret that information about individual licencees with the greatest number of authorisations is not readily available and could be ascertained only at disportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Products (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated production of the principal agricultural products under the common agricultural policy in each European Economic Community country in 1984 so far as at present known.

Mr. Jopling: The latest estimates available are as follows. This information is provisional and subject to change.

Estimated 1984 European Community Agricultural Production

'000 tonnes

	Germany	*France*	*Italy*	*Netherlands*	*Belgium and Luxembourg*	*United Kingdom*	*Ireland*	*Denmark*	*Greece*	*EC 10*
Common wheat *(a)*	10,223	32,610	5,365	1,120	1,176	14,940	597	2,411	1,734	70,176
Barley *(a)*	10,284	11,690	1,473	193	910	10,958	1,601	6,288	840	44,237
Sugar *(a)*	2,895	4,247	1,285	935	838	1,325	219	547	218	12,509
Oilseeds:										
Rapeseed and Colza *(a)*	655	1,300	10	38	12	923	15	517	—	3,470
Sunflower *(a)*	—	850-900	220	—	—	—	—	—	45	1,115-1,165
Olive Oil ¶ *(a)*	—	—	400	—	—	—	—	—	250	650
Wine ('000 hectolitres) ● *(a)*	7,800	66,300	69,300	0	157	13	0	0	5,025	148,595
Milk ■ *(d)*	22,522	24,129	7,310	12,415	*2,762 † 273	15,567	5,427	5,036	324	‡
Beef and Veal *(a)*	1,615	2,035	885	491	293	1,105	456	244	81	7,205
Pigmeat • *(b)*	3,229	1,716	1,124	1,546	694	*(c)* 941	145	1,045	147	10,587
Sheep and Goat meat *(a)*	23	169	54	21	5	296	41	1	122	732
Eggs (millions) *(e)*	12,800	14,835	10,800	11,500	3,150	12,890	600	1,300	2,560	70,435
Poultrymeat *(e)*	345	1,321	977	405	146	830	51	112	160	4,347

* Belgium.
† Luxembourg.
‡ Not available.
Figures include 1·511 million tonnes of sugar produced outside the CAP quota.
¶ Olive Oil is a bi-annual crop.
● Quality and table wines.
■ Cows milk delivered to dairies; *Full 1984 figures are not yet available and the figures quoted represent the following period:*
Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark; all 1984.
Germany, France, Luxembourg, Ireland; January to November 1984.
Italy, Belgium; January to October 1984.
Greece; January to September 1984.
• United Kingdom figure for home fed production; all others gross indigenous production.
Sources:
(a) EC Commission; *(b)* Meat and Livestock Commission Economic Bulletin; *(c)* MAFF; *(d)* Eurostat; *(e)* Poultry International.

Grain

Miss Maynard asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of grain stored in the United Kingdom on 30 November 1984; and what is the cost of storing such grain per day.

Mr. MacGregor: The value of cereals in intervention storage in the United Kingdom at 30 November 1984 was £267 million, applying the price per tonne set out in the annex to Commission regulation (EEC) No. 3248/84. Information on the cost of its storage is commercially confidential and depends on contractual terms negotiated at variable rates with individual storekeepers. The best guide is probably the monthly increment in intervention prices, which is designed to represent, on the basis of objective intervention provided by all EC member states, the cost of holding grain in store for one month, ignoring for example, handling charges. The increment for feed grain (which accounts for the bulk of the stock held) is £1·59 per tonne per month.

Farm Holdings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of companies owning agricultural land and the number of holdings and acreage so owned.

Mr. MacGregor: No official statistics are available on the ownership of agricultural land. However, following the passing of the Agriculture (Amendment) Act last year, which widened the Minister's powers to ask questions on land ownership we are currently considering as to how best to improve statistics on land ownership and occupation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* such estimates as he has been able to make concerning the number of persons owning more than one agricultural holding and, in particular, the numbers holding two or more holdings in excess of 50 hectares.

Mr. MacGregor: Information on the number of persons owning more than one agricultural holding is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will supplement table 4 of the annual review White Paper, Cmnd. 9423, with a table in the *Official Report* showing *(a)* the number of holdings of crops and grass with more than 200 and more than 300 hectares and their percentage of the total area, *(b)* the number of holdings with more than 500 and more than 1,000 standard man days together with their percentage contribution to production and *(c)* numbers and volume for holdings of more than 40 hectares of sugar beet, 100 dairy cows, 100 beef cows, 1,000 sheep, 50,000 laying fowls and 250,000 broilers.

Mr. MacGregor: Such information as is readily available is contained in "Agricultural Statistics United Kingdom 1983" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

European Community Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what effect a 10 per cent. fall in the value of the dollar would have on expenditure on the EEC budget under the various headings relating to matters within his responsibility.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has estimated that, assuming all other factors were unchanged, a 10 per cent. fall in the value of the dollar against the ecu would increase FEOGA expenditure by about 1,000 million ecu. The increases would arise principally on export refunds for cereals and production aids for oilseeds and cotton.

Field Beans

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1970, 1979, 1983 and 1984, respectively, the production, imports, exports and apparent consumption of field beans, the average prices in each case and the subsidy to United Kingdom production from public funds.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures available for field beans in the United Kingdom are as follows:

('000 tonnes)

	1970	*1979*	*1983*	*1984*
Production	160	128	105·1	125·7
Imports	n/a	0·1	0·1	0·1
Exports	n/a	98·6	20·8	18·1
Total new supply	n/a	29·5	84·4	107·7
Minimum producer price (for EC crop year, £ per tonne)	—	132·85	180·59	178·79
UK acreage grant (£ million)	1·1	—	—	—
EC subsidies for animal feed and human consumption (estimate) (£ million)	—	—	4·4	
EC subsidy on field beans certified for sowing (£ million)	—	0·8	0·3	

n/a Not available.

Note: Because separate figures for beans are not available, it i assumed that roughly 40 per cent. of expenditure on the peas a beans schemes for animal feed and human consumption relates t

Sources: UK Census, Customs trade figures, MAFF S Information, Supply Estimates, Intervention Board.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minist Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what decisions hav taken by the European Economic Community unc common agricultural policy about support for pe field beans, soya and lupin seeds in the past 12 m and what are the financial implications.

Mr. MacGregor: In March 1984 the Agric Council reduced the minimum and activating pric peas and beans by 1 per cent., saving about 1·8 made permanent the human consumption peas and scheme and reduced the guide price by 1 per cent. 0·3 mecu; raised the minimum and guide prices fo by 1·5 per cent., costing 1·1 mecu; and introduced scheme for the incorporation of lupins in animal costing 2 mecu. (All figures are based on Comm estimates of full year effects.)

Agricultural Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Ministe Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will p in the *Official Report* the evidence he has to sho lower prices have the effect of increasing output agricultural field.

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of no valid sci evidence to support this contention.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Ministe Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the ra indebtedness to operating capital in agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: Ratios of the external liabilit the assets of farm businesses in England, according to tenure type, are shown in table 32 of the report " Incomes in England, 1983/84". A copy of this repor the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Ministe Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the statist table 23B of Cmnd. 9423 are all on an historic cost and if he will publish in the *Official Report* correspo figures for any of the columns for any of the years to 1970.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures in table 23B of C 9423 are calculated on a current cost basis. Correspo figures for 1966 to 1970 are not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the increase in farming income on an historic cost basis since the average of the years 1967-68 to 1969-70.

Mr. MacGregor: The information on an historic cost basis is not available.

Salmon Tagging

Mr. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigation he has undertaken of the value of a salmon tagging scheme as a means of preventing poaching; what obstacles he has identified to the successful implementation of such a scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 20 February, at column 458, we have carried out a very thorough review of the practical problems associated with a salmon tagging scheme. This has involved discussions with the interested parties which have identified particular difficulties over the successful implementation of such a scheme, including the control of imports, the handling of our own farmed salmon and control over the issue and use of tags. I shall make an announcement as soon as we have been able to reach a conclusion.

Wages and Employment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the latest available year the information given in Appendix 1*(a)* and 1*(c)* of the Government Economic Service Working Paper No. 52 on wages and employment in agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the following tables:

Appendix 1 Recorded Numbers of Farmers and Workers, England and Wales, Numbers in Thousands
(a) Workers (Family and Hired) 1984

	Thousands
Male	
Whole-time	122·2
Part-time	23·5
Seasonal or casual	48·1
Female	
Whole-time	12·9
Part-time	26·7
Seasonal or casual	37·0
Total	
Whole-time	135·2
Part-time	50·2
Seasonal or casual	85·1

(c) Farmers, Partners, Directors and their Spouses (doing farm work) and Salaried Managers 1984

	Thousands
Whole-time	
Principal farmers and partners (v)	119·6
Other partners and directors (v)	37·3
Total farmers, partners and directors (v)	156·8
Part-time	
Principal farmers and partners (v)	47·6
Other partners and directors (v)	22·1
Total farmers, partners and directors (v)	69·7
Total farmers, partners and directors (v)	226·5
Wives/husbands of	
Principal farmers and partners (v)	57·3
Other partners and directors (v)	4·5
Total farmers partners and directors (v)	61·9
Salaried Managers	6·9

Information for the years 1981 to 1983 is available in "Agriculture Statistics United Kingdom 1983", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Products (Prices)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated disposals on world markets on which the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section of the 1985 budget appropriations is based, specifying the tonnage of the principal products and the corresponding outturn for 1984.

Mr. MacGregor: The 1985 European Community budget has not yet been adopted. Final statistics on exports of agricultural products from the Community are not yet available for 1984.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for meat, dairy products and sugar *(a)* the ex-farm, ex-factory price, *(b)* the target price, *(c)* the intervention price and *(d)* the retail price in 1984 and at the latest available date, where possible on the same basis as the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 25 June 1980, *Official Report*, columns 215-18.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested on ex-farm, ex-factory prices and retail prices is in the following tables. Details of target and intervention prices are set out on pages 234-243 of "The Agricultural Situation in the European Community—1984 Report", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The representative rate, at which institutional prices should be converted to sterling, remains at £1=1·61641 ecu.

Table 1
Ex-farm, ex-factory prices

Commodity and Definition	*Price* *1984*	*Week ended 9 February 1985*
Beef		
Average market price, clean cattle, per live kg	96·5p	94·9p
Lamb		
Average market price, certified fat sheep, per kg est dcw	175·8p	168·7p
Pigmeat		
Average market price, clean pigs, per kg dwt	108·4p	103·15p

Commodity and Definition	Price 1984	Week ended 9 February 1985
Poultry		
Average wholesale price, broilers, per lb	47·3p	41·0p
Butter		
Average first hand price, bulk butter, home-produced, per tonne	£2,229	£2,270
Cheese		
Average first hand price, English cheddar, creamery, white rindless, per tonne	£1,782	£1,880
Sugar		
Refined, bulk, granulated, per tonne	£419	£419

Table 2
Average Retail Prices

Commodity and Definition	Price (pence) 1984	11 December 1984
Beef		
Home-killed, chuck, per kg	371·0	377·4
Lamb		
Home-killed leg (with bone), per kg	368·4	371·7
Pork		
Home-killed leg (foot off), per kg	242·6	256·8
Poultry		
3 lb frozen broilers, per lb	61·8	62·4
Butter		
Danish, per kg	219·3	229·6
Cheese		
Cheddar type, per kg	257·6	263·7
Sugar		
Granulated, per kg	47·6	47·1

Source: Employment Gazette

European Community (Net Value Added)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the net value added per head in Britain agriculture in real terms each year since 1973 calculated on the basis used in the table on page 36 of the 1983 report on the agricultural situation in the Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The following table shows the SOEC index of real agricultural net value added at factor cost per person engaged, with the average of 1979 to 1981 being equal to 100.

	Net value added
1973	130·4
1974	116·5
1975	114·7
1976	121·7
1977	112·4
1978	108·1
1979	103·4
1980	96·3
1981	99·3
1982	112·4
1983	104·0
1984*	115·1

* Forecast.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minis Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publis *Official Report* the principal items of expenditure European Economic Community country whi designed to encourage production of products subsequently have to be disposed of under the c agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have full and a details of any such items of expenditure.

Warble Fly

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, F and Food whether he will list the countries in the E Economic Community which require by law al farmers to use an organophosphorous compound exclusive method of controlling warble fly.

Mrs. Fenner: Comprehensive information on t position in other member states could be obtained detailed and expensive inquiries. However, information available to us, the following understanding of the situation.

The Republic of Ireland is the only other Com country with a national eradication campaign. Com dressing with a systemic treatment, includi ganophosphorous compounds, is a requirement infestation is found. In Germany, infected he required to be treated in the spring and autumn systemic dressing. In France, the Netherlands a there are regional schemes where there is com treatment using approved organophosphorous dre Neither Belgium nor Greece has a control programm voluntary systemic treatments are encouraged, D is free from warble fly infestations.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fi and Food what steps are being taken by Her Ma Government to provide dairy quotas for new entr dairy farming other than through inheriting, buy leasing dairy quota.

Mr. Jopling: At present our priority must be t those who are already committed to dairying. That we intend to re-allocate quota obtained from outg small producers and to exceptional hardship cases. dairy farmers and other potential new entrants to th industry are not of course prevented from doing so can acquire a farm with quota on it in one of the w hon. Member has described. Given the continuing production of milk in the Community, it may not b best interests of new producers or the industry ge to facilitate their entering into dairying.

Lobsters

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minis Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many lobste exported from the United Kingdom to member state European Community in 1984; to which countrie exports were made; how many lobsters were import the United Kingdom from Economic Community m states in 1984; and from which countries these i were made.

Mr. MacGregor: The available information is as follows:

	Exports Tonnes	*Imports Tonnes*
Belgium/Luxembourg	130	6
Denmark	10	6
France	506	24
Greece	—	—
Irish Republic	2	2
Italy	12	—
Netherlands	145	—
West Germany	49	—

— Less than one tonne

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Research

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Agriculture and Food Research Council in respect of research spending budgetary allocations.

Mr. Jopling: There are close and continuing consultations between my Department and the Agricultural and Food Research Council on the future programme of commissioned work. These issues are also discussed in the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food, on which the AFRC is represented. In addition, members of the Agricultural and Food Research Service have expressed their views on future budgetary allocations in correspondence to hon. members and these have been forwarded to me and my colleagues.

Agricultural Trade Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1981 to overcome the problem of price differentials for trade in cereals as described in paragraph 10 of the evidence submitted by the Grain and Feed Trade Association and the United Kingdom Agriculture Supply Trade Association to the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the European Communities concerning agricultural trade policy published in its second report, Session 1981-82.

Mr. MacGregor: The fixing of cereal prices is a matter for the Community as a whole. The United Kingdom Government have consistently and strongly argued for a policy of price restraint in this sector, including a reduction in target (and hence threshold) prices and for the abolition of the additional price support given to breadmaking wheat. Since 1981 this policy has been increasingly successful. Cereals support price were cut in ecu terms in 1984-85 and the Commission proposals for 1985-86 include a 3·57 per cent. reduction in target and intervention price for most cereals.

In addition, since 1981 the impact of special support for breadmaking wheat has been greatly reduced. The premium for minimum quality breakmaking wheat has been cut and a 3 million tonne limit imposed on the quantity of wheat that may be bought into intervention at this price.

For 1985-86 the Commission has said that it does not intend to operate intervention at this level at all. The 120-day delay in payment for sales into intervention applied to all cereals since last season has also effectively reduced cereal prices.

Mediterranean Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken by the European Economic Community to curb production of Mediterranean products as foreseen in his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 27 April 1984, *Official Report*, columns 630-31.

Mr. MacGregor: Since I replied to the hon. Member on 27 April 1984, at columns 630-31, it became apparent that the guarantee threshold applying in the 1983-84 marketing year to certain tomato products had been exceeded and as a consequence the proposed processing aid in respect of tomato concentrate in 1984-85 was reduced, proportionately, by 4·7 per cent.

Important decisions have been taken on wine. At its meeting on 25 to 27 February the Council of Ministers adopted measures amounting to a guarantee threshold whereby production in excess of a defined limit has to be distilled at low prices together with a system of aid for producers grubbing up vines and going out of production and a commitment to a restrictive price policy.

Livestock Shipments (Falkland Islands)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is intended to make further shipments of livestock to the Falkland Islands.

Mrs. Fenner: I am not at present aware of any plans for such shipments.

New Zealand Produce

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost to British farmers of the special arrangements made by which New Zealand farmers enjoy access to the British market for agricultural produce following the United Kingdom's accession to the European Community; and for how long these commitments will last.

Mr. MacGregor: The European Community's commitment to provide continued access to the United Kingdom market on special terms for certain quantities of New Zealand butter derives from protocol 18 of the United Kingdom Act of Accession and from the declaration by Community Heads of Government in March 1975. This commitment is indefinite. Current detailed arrangements under protocol 18 expire on 31 December 1988 and the Council of Ministers of the Community will have to decide at the appropriate time the detailed conditions for future access.

Access to the European Community market on special terms for certain quantities of New Zealand cheese was negotiated as part of the last round of multilateral trade negotiations under the GATT and is of indefinite duration.

United Kingdom support for these arrangements derives from our desire to maintain our long-standing political and other ties with New Zealand and our recognition of the importance to the New Zealand economy of access to markets in the European Community for these products.

I am satisfied that the support provided under the common agricultural policy for dairy products adequately protects United Kingdom producers. It is not possible to

quantify any effects which these imports might have on price formation in United Kingdom and Community markets.

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the annual cost to the Exchequer of the special arrangements made between Her Majesty's Government and the New Zealand Government relating to access to *(a)* the British market and *(b)* the rest of the European Economic Community of New Zealand farm produce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Such arrangements are made by the European Community, not between Her Majesty's Government and the New Zealand Government.

Sea Fisheries Statistical Table

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why there has been no publication of a sea fisheries statistical table for 1983.

Mr. MacGregor: The publication "Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables" provides detailed information on the fishing industry in the United Kingdom. Although most of the figures have been available for some time there have been operational difficulties in finalising a few of the tables. In the interim a statistical information notice (STATS 176/84) was issued on 23 July 1984 giving provisonal figures for landings in the United Kingdom.

It is expected that the publication "Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables 1983" will become available in about eight weeks time.

SCOTLAND

Disciplinary Cases

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the longest interval taken to progress a disciplinary case before the Health Services Tribunal, from date of reference by a health board to determination, including any current case; and if he will name the medical or dental practitioner concerned.

Mr. John MacKay: In one case the relevant health board made representations to the National Health Service tribunal more than four years ago that the continued inclusion of the practitioner on the board's list would be prejudicial to the efficiency of the service in question. That case is not yet finally resolved and I therefore do not consider it appropriate to name the practitioner.

Better Business Services

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current scope and geographical coverage of the better business services scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The better business service scheme, funded by the non-quota section of the European regional development fund, has been in operation in Strathclyde region since October 1983, as a consequence of the European Commission's designation of the region as a steel and shipbuilding closure area, and in the assisted areas of Tayside region since November 1984, as a consequence of the designation of these areas as a textile closure area. Since November 1984, the scheme has also been operated and funded by the Highlands Development Board in its area and by Development Agency in those areas of S otherwise covered.

The scheme makes available to small defined as manufacturing companies emp people or less and service sector companies e people or less, financial assistance towards consultancy services. The assistance is 55 per cost of the consultancy up to a maximum gra

Conservation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary Scotland what is the Forestry Commission's regard to conservation issues and bodies.

Mr. John MacKay: In carrying out its fu Forestry Commission takes full account of issues and maintains links with conservation bo local and national levels.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary Scotland if he will publish the names of the the Greater Glasgow health board and the dat their current appointments terminate.

Mr. John MacKay: The information req follows:

Greater Glasgow health board

Members	*Date of of appo*
Mr. D. F. Macquaker *(Chairman)*	31 Mar
Lady S. Goold	31 Mar
Lady B. Gunn, OBE	31 Mar
Professor E. M. McGirr, CBE	31 Mar
Dr. J. MacKay, OBE	31 Mar
Mr. B. A. Maan	31 Mar
Dr. G. B. S. Roberts	31 Mar
Mr. H. Sherriff	31 Mar
Mr. C. Williams	31 Mar
Miss E. Donachie	31 Mar
Mr. J. F. Dunnachie	31 Mar
Mr. A. D. Garland	31 Mar
Mr. J. Ross Harper	31 Mar
Mr. P. W. Holst	31 Mar
Mr. J. Jackson	31 Mar
Mrs. I. D. Kerr	31 Mar
Professor I. M. Ledingham	31 Mar
Mrs. M. McGarry	31 Mar
Mr. J. A. Peel	31 Mar
Miss D. B. Rigg	31 Mar
Mr. D. S. Sinnott	31 Mar

There are currently two vacancies on this b

South of Scotland Electricity Boar

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary Scotland if he will publish the names of the the South of Scotland Electricity Board and t which their current appointments terminate.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information req follows:

	Date of expiry of current appointment
Mr. D. J. Miller *(Chairman)*	31 March 1987
Dr. I. M. H. Preston *(Deputy Chairman)*	13 February 1988
Mr. A. Barr	31 December 1987
Mr. M. Joughin*	31 December 1986
Mr. N. C. Kuenssberg	31 December 1986
Professor D. I. MacKay	31 December 1986
Mr. D. McLean	31 December 1985
Mrs. M. Thomson	31 December 1986
Mr. G. B. Whyte†	31 December 1986

* Ex-officio member as chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board.

† Ex-officio member as chairman of the Electricity Consultative Council for the South of Scotland district.

House Purchase and Repossession

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many municipal and private dwellings have been purchased with local authority finance since 1981; and how many of these dwellings have been repossessed through non-payment of mortgage repayments.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	Loans to private persons for purchase of		Number of repossessions for default of payment
	Council houses	Other dwellings	
1981-82	1,542	3,317	69
1982-83	1,416	1,390	118
1983-84	836	792	*

* Information about the number of repossessions is no longer collected.

Returns have not been received from Western Isles and Clydebank for 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, West Lothian for 1981-82, 1982-83, Annandale and Eskdale for 1981-82, 1983-84, Tweeddale, Falkirk, Bearsden and Milngavie for 1982-83, 1983-84, Inverness and Dumbarton for 1981-82, Strathkelvin for 1982-83 and Gordon, Badenoch and Strathspey and Dundee for 1983-84.

Lanarkshire Health Board

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the names of the members of the Lanarkshire health board and the dates on which their current appointments terminate.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

Lanarkshire health board

Members	Date of termination of appointment
Mrs. B. M. Gunn, OBE *(Chairman)*	31 March 1985
Mrs. A. P. C. C. Allison	31 March 1985
Dr. G. A. Bell	31 March 1985
Mr. J. A. Campbell, BEM	31 March 1985
Mrs. A. S. Hinshalwood	31 March 1985
Mrs. J. H. Holmes	31 March 1985
Mrs. D. C. McGirr	31 March 1985
Mr. A. E. McIlwain	31 March 1985
Dr. A. M. Mathewson	31 March 1985
Mr. A. R. Miller, CBE	31 March 1985
Mr. W. Bertram, MBE	31 March 1987
Dr. D. Datta	31 March 1987
Mr. R. J. Logan	31 March 1987
Mr. D. McClymont	31 March 1987
Mrs. A. M. Maggs	31 March 1987
Mr. W. O'Brien	31 March 1987
Mr. T. S. L. Reid	31 March 1987
Mr. J. P. Robison	31 March 1987
Mr. S. J. Scott	31 March 1987
Mr. W. Traynor	31 March 1987
Miss H. Brown, MBE	31 March 1987

There are currently two vacancies on this board.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotlan how many representations he has received from membe of the public with regard to the Government's proposa to limit the range of drugs available on the National Healt Service.

Mr. John MacKay: To date my right hon. Friend ha received some 3,200 representations.

Sea Fisheries Statistical Table

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotlan why the Department of Agriculture and Fisherie (Scotland) did not publish a sea fisheries statistical tabl for 1983.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that, because o operational difficulties, the publication of the 1983 se fisheries statistical tables has been delayed. We expect t publish these tables in May. The Department ha continued to publish regularly monthly summaries o landings up to and including December 1984, as well a the most important annual summaries for 1983 and 1984 I have arranged for the hon. Member to have a copy of th latest publication.

Rating

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotlan what is the cost of *(a)* advertising and *(b)* publishing othe information on the 1985 revaluation and the appeal system available to domestic ratepayers.

Mr. Younger: My Department has so far spen £99,380 on advertising campaigns in the Scottish press an on local radio.

Three million copies were produced of a leaflet— "You and Your Rates"—copies of which are bein issued with every valuation notice. The Scottish Ofic supplied assessors with copies of a further leaflet and booklet to assist ratepayers who might wish to appea against their valuations. Total printing costs were £27,000

Scottish Council (Development and Industry) Conference

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotlan what consideration he is giving to the findings of th Scottish Council (Development and Industry) Conferenc on training investment held in Edinburgh on 27 February

Mr. Allan Stewart: The conference, "The Training Investment," was promoted jointly by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) and the Manpower Services Comission to serve two purposes. First, it provided an opportunity to discuss the council's report "YTS and Beyond," which looked at YTS experience in Dundee and Renfrew and how the scheme fits into the wider training scene. This linked with the second purpose, which was to launch the adult training campaign in Scotland, for the implementation of which the Government have asked the Manpower Services Commission to assume responsibility. The conference provided an appropriate forum for stimulating debate on adult training among senior employers, trade unionists, educationists and others. The conference proceedings will prove valuable in carrying the campaign forward and the Government are grateful to the Scottish Council and the Manpower Services Commission for their initiative in promoting it. The conference was not designed to produce findings as such.

Class Sizes

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many children are taught in composite classes in each region and island authority;

(2) what is the average class size in the primary schools of each education authority in Scotland; and what were the equivalent figures for 1979-80.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *131*]: I have today written to the hon. Member.

TRANSPORT

Gas Mains

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to restrict vehicles of maximum laden weights within European Economic Community guidelines to special routes away from roads containing gas mains.

Mrs. Chalker: Under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, county councils may make traffic regulation orders specifying through routes for heavy commercial vehicles, or prohibiting or restricting, the use of heavy commercial vehicles in such zones or on such roads as may be specified. It is for the councils to decide what restrictions may be appropriate in their areas. The Department have reminded highway authorities of the need to ensure that roads and bridges on to which heavy vehicles are to be diverted by a traffic management scheme are capable of carrying those vehicles.

Regional Airports

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers were handled at each major United Kingdom regional airport in 1974, 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures are:

Terminal Passengers (000s)

	1974	*1979*	**1984*
Manchester	2,231·6	3,463·5	5,951·4
Glasgow	1,935·4	2,358·2	2,746·9
Aberdeen	446·4	1,285·0	
Birmingham	1,017·0	1,561·9	
Belfast	1,225·2	1,411·1	
Edinburgh	790·7	1,244·3	
East Midlands	442·4	593·6	
Newcastle	581·4	854·1	
Cardiff	229·6	235·5	
Bristol	183·6	238·4	
Leeds Bradford	283·0	388·3	
Southampton	308·8	330·5	
Teeside	187·3	279·1	
Isle of Man	430·4	377·5	
Prestwick	343·3	419·7	
Liverpool	499·5	598·8	
Sumburgh	149·2	620·3	

* Provisional.

Airports (London)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of Transport how many and what percentage of th each of London's airports is accounted for by making a connection between one international another.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Provisional figures show that 3·4 million passengers at Heathro connection between one international flight an representing almost 12 per cent. of total passengers at Heathrow. The equivalent fi Gatwick were 0·6 million and 4 per cent. The such passengers at Luton and Stansted was neg

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of Transport how many passengers were handled London's airports in 1974, 1979 and the last y

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures are:

Terminal Passengers (000s)

	1974	*1979*
Heathrow	20,077·3	27,978·5
Gatwick	5,119·4	8,694·6
Stansted	199·1	347·2
Luton	2,022·8	2,207·3

* Provisional.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of Transport how many passengers from the majo airports in 1984 travelled to or from each of airports; and what percentage transferred to int flights.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information is as

Route	*Total Passengers*	*Percenta ring to/fr*
Manchester/Heathrow	675,000	
Manchester/Gatwick	167,000	
Glasgow/Heathrow	940,000	
Glasgow/Gatwick	139,000	
Aberdeen/Heathrow	375,000	
Aberdeen/Gatwick	74,000	
Edinburgh/Heathrow	864,000	
Edinburgh/Gatwick	152,000	
Newcastle/Heathrow	247,000	
Newcastle/Gatwick	25,000	

Route	Total Passengers	Percentage transferring to/from international flights Per cent.
Birmingham/ Heathrow	87,000	84
East Midlands/ Heathrow	66,000	79
East Midlands/ Birmingham/ Gatwick	24,000	65

A3 (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for lighting the A3 between Kingston and Guildford.

Mrs. Chalker: No, there are no plans at the present time to light this section of the A3 either wholly or partially.

Railway Sidings (Grants)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number and value of section 8 grants for each year since 1979 in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for these grants in the Principality as I am in England. The information requested is as follows:

		Number of grants awarded	Total Grant Commitment £'000
England			
	1979	11	3,670
	1980	12	5,662
	1981	6	4,029
	1982	11	3,214
	1983	9	4,529
	1984	14	5,408
Wales			
	1979	Nil	Nil
	1980	1	52
	1981	Nil	Nil
	1982	1	34
	1983	6	1,159
	1984	2	364

Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which boroughs are in consultation with him in agreeing guidance for traffic management matters including cycling, safety, pedestrians, signals and bus priority measures in London; and when this guidance will be available;

(2) which boroughs gave him a view on the proposed extension to London's trunk road network; and which boroughs have expressed agreement with the proposals;

(3) which London boroughs gave him a view on the proposed designated road network; and which boroughs have expressed agreement with the proposals.

Mrs. Chalker: We have issued consultation papers to all boroughs and received views and reactions from them all. A majority are in favour of the approach proposed. We will continue to develop our proposals on the matters referred to by the hon. Member in close consultation with all boroughs willing to participate.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of trunking further roads in London rather than designating them.

Mrs. Chalker: To transfer ownership to the appropriate successor highway authority.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the possibility of road widening involving demolition of properties and new roads over different routes through the urban fabric of London has been excluded from the terms of reference of the civil engineering consultants undertaking his exploratory assessment studies announced in November 1984.

Mrs. Chalker: The terms of reference were set out in the press notices issued on 20 November giving details of the assessment studies, a copy of which were sent to the hon. Member at that time. I am sending the hon. Member a further copy of the general press notice.

Urban Trunk Roads

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those roads in urban areas that have been trunked without *(a)* publication of an order by him, *(b)* consultation with local residents and *(c)* the right to a public inquiry, since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Roads

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the differences between trunk roads and designated roads.

Mrs. Chalker: Ownership.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the policy priorities applying *(a)* to trunk roads and *(b)* to designated roads.

Mrs. Chalker: The approach applying to trunk roads was set out in paragraphs 3.1-3.6 of "Policy for Roads in England: 1983" (Cmnd. 9059). Policy for designated roads will be developed in consultation with borough councils.

Traffic Management

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his guidance for traffic control correlates with the existing Greater London council recommendations to limit the amount of central London parking.

Mrs. Chalker: I propose to develop guidance on traffic management in consultation with London boroughs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff his Department employs who have London-wide expertise and experience in the fields of traffic management with special reference to pedestrians, cycling, and bus facilities.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department has a number of staff with wide expertise and experience in these fields, both nationally and in London. Their skills and resources are made available to assist local authorities.

London Planning Commission

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what role the proposed London Planning Commission will have in advising him on highway, traffic and public transport matters in London.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to what I said at columns 139-57 during the proceedings of the Standing Committee on the Local Government Bill, of which he is a member, where these matters were debated.

Transport Boards (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the members of the London Transport Board and their salaries as at 29 June 1984 and the members of the London Regional Transport Board and their salaries at present.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

LONDON TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE
Salaries as at 28 June (final day before reconstitution as LRT)

	£
Dr. Keith Bright (Chairman)	*46,558
Dr. Tony Ridley	*38,614
Dr. David Quarmby	*37,110
Mr. Ian Phillips	*33,799
Mr. Arthur Latham	18,357
Part-time members:	
Ms. Merle Amory	7,343
Ms. Eleanor Lewin	7,343
Mr. Ernest Rodker	7,343
Ms. Kerry Hamilton	3,672
Mr. John Palmer	3,672
Mr. Lawrence Smith	3,672

* Includes separate fee from London Transport International Services Ltd, which was consolidated into LRT salaries.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT
Salaries as at 7 March 1985

	£
Dr. Keith Bright (Chairman)	47,500
Dr. Tony Ridley	41,000
Mr. John Beasley	41,000
Mr. Barry Dale	41,000
Part-time members:	
Mr. David Hardy (Deputy Chairman)*	13,000
Mr. Keith Brown	4,500
Miss Eileen Cole	4,500
Dr. Stephen Glaister	4,500
Mr. Simon Jenkins	4,500
Mr. Kenneth Joyner	4,500
Mrs. Helen Robinson	4,500
Miss Patricia Steel	4,500

GLC (CR6 Project)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement with regard to the future of the Greater London council-funded CR6 project for improving taxis for people with disabilities.

Mrs. Chalker: Although I understand that the GLC made a financial contribution to this project to develop a new London taxi, the principal external support for the project is being given by Government under the support for innovation scheme. The research into provision for wheelchair bound and other disabled people in taxis has been undertaken by my Department. The future of the project is not dependent upon the GLC, I have no reason to believe that it is not proceeding satisfactorily.

GLC (Taxicard Scheme)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the London borough councils with which he has discussed the future of the Greater London council's taxicard scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The future of the Taxicard scheme, and the dial-a-ride services for disabled people in London, is to be discussed by a working party of officials from the London Boroughs Association, London Regional Transport and my Department. The Association of London Authorities has not yet responded to an invitation to join those discussions.

EMPLOYMENT

Redundant Mineworkers

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to issue guidelines to the Manpower Services Commission about the provision of retraining placements for redundant mineworkers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have no plans to issue any special guidelines. The appropriate range of Manpower Services Commission services will of course be available to any redundant mineworkers. In that connection, I understand that the National Coal Board is in discussion with the commission about training opportunities as part of the NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. initiative.

Gas Supply

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what public relations activity he has initiated to emphasise the characteristics of gas and the hazards which may result from mistakes or ill-considered actions by customers when using gas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The British Gas Corporation is responsible for the safe day-to-day operation of the gas supply system and mounts regular publicity campaigns explaining how to use gas safely.

The Health and Safety Executive is publishing a leaflet "The Gas Regulations for Everybody's Safety" aimed at householders and all who use gas. It draws attention to the nature of the hazards of gas and the need for adequate ventilation and regular maintenance of appliances, and stresses that by law only competent installers may work with gas. It also gives advice on what people should do if they suspect a gas leak.

The leaflet will be well publicised and will shortly be available from citizens advice bureaux, gas showrooms, gas suppliers, public libraries, the regional gas consumers councils, regional offices of the Confederation of Registered Gas Installers and the Health and Safety Executive.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what research and developments have taken

place in the last five years with the aim of producing fixed automatic gas alarms which are cheap, reliable, safe and with little need for maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Research and development into gas detection equipment has been going on during the last five years. There is now a wide range of fixed automatic gas alarms, but the capital and maintenance costs are such that they are only suitable for industrial use.

Domestic gas alarms are available but they are expensive and have not proved to be reliable. The Health and Safety Executive shares the view of the King report that in domestic premises the odour of gas is still the best warning.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what offices have been established for the purpose of compiling data information on gas explosions received in collaboration with the police, ambulance services, fire brigades, gas, water and electricity authorities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Executive receives information specifically relating to gas incidents from gas suppliers. It is used in policy and enforcement work. It is the executive's practice to make accident information available in its industry section reports. In addition, the Home Office publishes annual figures relating to fires attended by local authority fire brigades.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *250*, on what date the withdrawal of clearance for the pesticide dieldrin in products used by householders or by firms specialising in wood treatment in situ became effective.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The withdrawal of clearance for the pesticide dieldrin in products used by householders or by firms specialising in wood treatment in situ became effective from 31 December 1984.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a figure for the amount of dieldrin, as active ingredient, employed in pre-treatment of timbers, in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if the use of dieldrin in any chemical used in any paint, lacquer, damp proofer or other preparation, apart from pre-treatment of timber, is still permitted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The use of dieldrin in paints or lacquers is permitted. To the best of our knowledge, dieldrin is not used in damp-proofing preparations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department intends to allow the continued use of dieldrin pesticide as long as existing stocks last.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to prevent the continued use of dieldrin.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints regarding the misapplication or effects of wood treatment chemicalsand pesticides were made by the public and received by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years for which figures are available; how many such cases were investigated and a report prepared; in how many cases a prosecution was initiated by the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety at Work Act; and in how many such instances the prosecution was successful.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A comprehensive central record is not kept of the information requested.

Young Persons

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for the employment of young people in the west midlands in 1984 showing *(a)* numbers of 16, 17 and 18-year-olds leaving full-time education; *(b)* the numbers expected to enter youth training schemes, *(c)* the number expected to be employed under the young workers scheme, *(d)* the number in employment other than those employed under the young workers scheme and *(e)* the numbers still unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information on numbers of 16, 17 and 18-year-olds in the west midlands region entering the youth training scheme over the last year, or covered by the young workers scheme or claiming unemployment benefit in January 1985 is set out in the following table.

Young people aged	*YTS**	*YWS†*	*Claimant unemployed‡*
16	46,000	..	5,000
17	4,000	..	15,000
18	—	..	21,000
16 to 18	50,000	7,000	41,000

* Entrants between April and December 1984, together with estimates for January to March 1985. The age breakdown is based on age at leaving school.

† Estimated number supported in January 1985. An age breakdown is not available, but almost all of those supported will be 17 years old on entry.

‡ Those claiming unemployment benefit on 10 January 1985. Of these, the proportions classified as school-leavers (that is, those who have never had a job, not simply those who left school recently) are 72, 55, 46 and 53 per cent. for 16, 17, 18 and 16 to 18-year-olds respectively.

.. = Not available.

The estimates cannot be directly related to those leaving full-time education in 1984. Estimated numbers of young people in the west midlands leaving full-time education in 1984 or entering employment other than under the young workers scheme are not yet available.

Young Workers Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the figures for 1982, 1983 and 1984, nationally and for the west midlands, for males and females of *(a)* the numbers of young people employed under the young workers scheme, *(b)* the average length of their employment under the scheme, *(c)* the average total amounts in subsidy paid to employers per worker and *(d)* the average wage offered to young workers employed under the scheme as declared on the application form YWS 1 (Rev 2);

(2) if he will give the figures since 1982, nationally and for the west midlands, of the numbers of young people

employed under the young workers scheme who, under the scheme, have continued their employment for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* up to 12 months and *(c)* 12 months or longer;

(3) if he will provide figures showing the total expenditure of his Department in 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1985 to date, on the young workers scheme, giving details of *(a)* advertising costs and *(b)* average cost per placement under the scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number of approved applications and expenditure on the scheme nationally since it opened in January 1982 was as follows:

	Expenditure Great Britain £ million	*Approved Applications Great Britain*	*Approved Applications West Midlands*
1982-83	40·7	*174,442	*17,945
1983-84	58·3	129,538	15,416
1984-85 (to date)	34·9	63,976	8,618

* Includes applications approved January-March 1982

Total publicity expenditure over the same period has been £366,000.

Information on the duration of support, average subsidy paid, average wage or post-scheme experience is not available in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A sample survey carried out by social and community planning research in 1983 estimated that the average of the grants paid was then £13·58p a week; since 1 April 1984 a single level of grant of £15 a week has been payable in respect of each application approved. The 1983 survey also estimated that the average wage payable to those joining the scheme was then £35·50p. The maximum period an individual can be supported under the scheme is 12 months and the survey suggested an average period of actual support of nine months. 90 per cent. of employers indicated that they would keep the young person on after the period of support had ended. The survey evidence indicated that of the young people supported by the scheme, 54 per cent. were male and 46 per cent. female. It is estimated that in 1984-85 the average gross cost per person supported under the scheme was £560.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of applicants for the enterprise allowance scheme in Shrewsbury and Atcham, and the number awarded.

Mr. Alan Clark: No separate figures are available for the Shrewsbury and Atcham area, but these are included in the Manpower Services Commission's employment division area centred on Shrewsbury, which covers Shropshire. The figures at the end of February 1985 were:

Applicants: 776
Approved applications: 676

Walthamstow

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of employees in employment in the Walthamstow jobcentre area for 1971, 1975, 1978, 1981 and 1984, showing total numbers employed and the respective proportions in manufacturing and service industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is as follows:

Employees in employment in the Walthamstow jobcentre area

	Total all industries and services (thousands)	*Percentage employed in Manufacturing industries*	*Service industries*
June 1971	77·7	38·7	55·3
June 1975	80·2	33·9	58·8
June 1978	78·7	30·8	62·5
September 1981*	†59·0	27·5	65·3

* Latest available.

† Because of a boundary change, the figure for 1981 excludes approximately 11,000 employees who would have previously been counted in the area.

Estimates from the census of employment for September 1984 are expected to become available in the latter part of this year.

Community Programme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the net cost per person per week of the community programme;

(2) what was the net cost per person per week at current price levels of the community enterprise programme;

(3) how many people are currently occupying places on the community programme;

(4) what is the average length of stay on the community programme;

(5) what is the age distribution of participants in the community programme;

(6) how many women are currently occupying places on the community programme;

(7) if he will provide figures on the ethnic minority representation among participants in the community programme;

(8) how many full-time and part-time jobs are provided on the community programme;

(9) if he will provide details of the distribution of places amongst different kinds of sponsors on the community programme;

(10) if he will provide details of the different types of work which are made available on the community programme;

(11) if he will provide details of the proportion of workers on the community programme who obtained employment on leaving the scheme and were in employment six months after leaving the scheme;

(12) how many people currently on the community programme have been offered training;

(13) what is the duration of training offered to people on the community programme;

(14) what type of training is offered to people on the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The 1985 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) estimates the gross cost of a community programme place in the previous year as some £4,290 per year, and its net cost per person no longer unemployed as some £2,200 per year. In a memorandum to the Public Accounts Committee on 28 February 1983, para. 9.4, the Comptroller and Auditor General estimated the net Exchequer cost of the community enterprise programme per person no longer unemployed as between £2,000 and £2,600 per year. It is not possible without

incurring disproportionate expense to provide useful and reliable estimates of the net costs of a place on the community programme or the community enterprise programme.

At the end of January 1985, 131,297 people were employed on the community programme, and survey evidence indicates that their average stay is 9·1 months. Over the past 12 months, 33·8 per cent. of entrants have been aged 18 to 20; 26·4 per cent. 21 to 24, and 39·6 per cent. 25 and over. Around 23 per cent. of entrants over the past 12 months have been women. Community programme entrants are not classified by ethnic origin, but sample surveys indicate that between 4 and 9 per cent. of programme participants are from ethnic minorities.

At the end of January 1985, 38,464 full-time jobs and 92,833 part-time jobs were provided under the programme. By the nature of the contractual arrangements possible under the community programme, it is not possible to classify the actual sponsor of every project. However, the best available information suggests that some 45 per cent. of places were provided by or through local authorities, and most of the remainder by or through voluntary organisations. Evidence from sample surveys suggests that the commonest principal activities on projects were environmental and landscaping (29 per cent.) and building and construction work (17 per cent.) followed by research and surveys, decorating, and social services for old people, although a great variety of other work of community benefit was also performed under the programme.

Recent sample survey evidence indicates that around 50 per cent. of community programme participants received training. The type of training available to participants includes induction training, formal and informal on-the-job training, and training away from the work place. Information about the duration of training is not available. This training is in addition to that being provided under the Government's adult training strategy, which I described in my reply to the hon. Member of 21 February, at column 515.

Sample survey evidence indicates that on leaving the programme, around 23 per cent. of participants went straight into a job and a further 4 per cent. into training or full-time education. When interviewed, an average 7·7 months after leaving the programme a third of former participants had a job, and a further 5 per cent. were in training.

Further information about the community programme is available in two sample surveys of community programme participants, conducted in autumn 1983 and spring 1984 by social and community planning research, and from an internal follow-up sample survey of participants conducted in May-August 1984. Copies of all these are in the Library of the House.

Construction Industry

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will give *(a)* the number of deaths, *(b)* the number of serious injuries and *(c)* the number of those employed in the construction industry in Scotland for the years 1979 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information for incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive for 1979-83 is as follows. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Construction Industry, Scotland 1979-83

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	**1983*
Deaths to employees	25	16	22	18	13
Deaths to non-employees (1)	2	2	5	4	4
Total Deaths	27	18	27	22	17
Major injuries to employees	n/a	n/a	244	284	†
Major injuries to non-employees	n/a	n/a	4	4	†
Total major injuries (2)	n/a	n/a	248	288	†
Employees (thousands)	164	161	144	128	125

* provisional
n/a not available
† not readily available
(1) Before 1981, deaths to non-employees were reported on a voluntary basis only and are therefore not directly comparable with figures for 1981 to 1983 which are based on reports resulting from a specific requirement under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980.
(2) Numbers of major injuries as defined in NADOR were not collected before 1981.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total cost of administration of his Department, expressed in constant prices, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 February 1985, c. *327-28*]: In my reply of 1 February the figures for 1983 contained elements of capital expenditure excluded from figures in the previous years. The costs of administration of the constituent parts of the Department expressed in 1983-84 prices in the last five years, using the same definition of administration costs throughout, was:

1983-84 prices	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Department of Employment	234·3	255·6	299·0	316·3	336·1
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service	15·3	15·1	12·4	12·6	12·8
Manpower Services Commission	335·7	337·1	330·4	338·3	333·4

1983-84 prices	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-
Health and Safety Commission	70·4	75·9	73·0	75·0	76
Total for the Department of Employment Group	655·7	683·7	714·8	742·2	759

This information is taken from the annual scrutinies of departmental running costs.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3 and 514/3 together with all supplements to these memoranda so far issued; what comparisons can be made between accident figures for the scheme and statistics published for the employed population generally by the Health and Safety Executive; and what instructions are given to Manpower Services Commission staff as to the comparisons that may be made.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1985, c. *18-19*]: Copies of Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3 and 514/3 and all current supplements to these memoranda are being placed in the Library.

Researchers from Aston university, who have examined a sample of accidents to trainees in the youth opportunities programme between April 1980 and March 1983, expressed strong reservations in their final report on the validity of comparing accident incidence rates for the youth opportunities programme with figures from the Health and Safety Executive applying to the employed population generally.

This conclusion is equally applicable to the youth training scheme. It would thus not be right to make comparisons between accident figures for the scheme and those published by the Health and Safety Executive, and Manpower Services Commission staff have been instructed accordingly.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library copies of the Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3 and 514/3 which give information on accidents to area manpower boards, plus their supplements.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *129*]: Yes. I am arranging for copies of Manpower Services Commission memoranda 511/3, 514/3 and their current supplements to be placed in the Library today. A copy of memorandum 511/3 supplement 4, has already been placed in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place a copy of the Manpower Services Commission's memorandum 894/1, which deals with appraisal of youth training scheme programmes, and 894/5 which deals with accidents to young persons on the youth training scheme in the Library.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1985, c. *129*]: Yes. I am arranging for copies of the Manpower Services Commission's memoranda 894/1 and 894/5 to be placed in the Library today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security Forces (Killings)

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State fo Northern Ireland how many people have been killed b Government security forces in Northern Ireland sinc 1968.

Mr. Scott: Since 1968, 265 people have been killed b the security forces in the course of their duties.

7. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Norther Ireland how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have bee killed in the Province by security forces since 1968.

Mr. Scott: Since 1968, 265 people have been killed b the security forces in the course of their duties. 253 o these were male and 12 were female.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

16. **Mr. Maginnis** asked the Secretary of State fo Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chie Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the effec of the recent cutback in Royal Ulster Constabulary overtime on operational tasking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On present estimates police overtime level for this financial year are likely to be higher than fo 1983-84. I have been assured by the Chief Constable tha there is no question of essential operations being curtailed by reductions in overtime working.

22. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State fo Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with leader of the Northern Ireland political parties about the Roya Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Hurd: In the last six months I have had a series of meetings with the leaders of Northern Ireland's four main political parties during which I have explained Government policy on a wide range of issues, including security and policing.

24. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I regularly meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and have been in close touch with him during the last week. Our meetings normally cover a wide range of matters relating to general security policy and particular aspects of policing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* the current compliment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as of 3 March 1985, in terms of stated religion and at the same date in 1984 and *(b)* the stated religion of Royal Ulster Constabulary casualties caused by direct terrorist attacks

on individual Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel during the period 4 March 1984 to 3 March 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Dairy Farmers

17. **Mr. Nicholson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made to help small dairy farmers in Northern Ireland in the light of the response to the Government's buy out scheme.

Dr. Boyson: The outgoers scheme was reopened for a two-week period in February and a further 1·7 million litres have been offered, making a total of about 13 million litres. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and other Ministers responsible for Agriculture in the United Kingdom are considering the difficulties which result from the fact that uptake is below expectations, but no decisions have as yet been reached.

Business and Employment Prospects

19. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on business and employment prospects in the Province.

Dr. Boyson: Recent surveys by the Confederation of British Industry and others have pointed to an improvement in the confidence and performance of the business community in Northern Ireland. This is supported by the trends in output and employment. The most recent figures for manufacturing output show an increase of 3 per cent. The numbers in employment have increased by over 4,300 in the last six months of 1984 and the underlying upward trend in unemployment has been significantly arrested. The prospects for improved economic performance are therefore very good.

Political Situation

20. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to establish new political structures to improve relationships between Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: Effective structures already exist through the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council, and the Government are always ready to consider realistic proposals for improving relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic.

Bank Deposits

21. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to require banks, on his instructions, to deposit with the High Court moneys which are suspected either of belonging to illegal organisations or of being destined for use in furtherance of terrorist activities, such moneys to remain on deposit for a specified period during which the custodian of the funds may seek to prove that they are for lawful purposes.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) earlier today.

Room Heaters

23. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in providing suitable heating in Housing Executive old peoples' dwellings.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive. I am, however, advised that out of a stock of 23,186 old persons' dwellings 12,066 have had their heating upgraded.

Security

25. **Rev. Ian Paisley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) earlier today.

Vehicle Thefts

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many stolen vehicles were recovered in each of the police divisions in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not readily available from existing records for the period prior to 1984, and it could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of stolen vehicles recovered in each police division during 1984 were as follows:

RUC Division	*Vehicles Recovered*
A	649
B	3,144
D	983
E	387
G	131
H	160
J	273
K	55
L	20
N	217
O	68
P	132

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been prosecuted for theft of vehicles in each police division in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

Mr. Scott: Six hundred and forty persons were proceeded against for offences relating to the taking of motor vehicles without the owners' consent in 1983. Because of changes in the Royal Ulster Constabulary's divisional structure in October 1983 this figure cannot be broken down by division for that year and divisional figures for 1984 are not necessarily comparable with those for previous years. The numbers proceeded against by division for 1981, 1982 and 1984 are as follows:

RUC Division	*1981*	*1982*	*1984*
A	23	40	73
B	161	214	137
C	28	57	—
D	41	52	76
E	55	44	31

RUC Division	1981	1982	1984
F	63	43	—
G	51	52	65
H	18	31	29
J	38	43	86
K	30	17	14
L	11	6	22
M	12	6	—
N	32	31	26
O	32	13	44
P	34	30	42
R	83	61	—
TOTAL	712	740	645

Converted Terrorists

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on *(a)* looking after converted terrorists during the period before the trials at which they were to give evidence and *(b)* providing converted terrorists with a new identity subsequently.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 26 February 1985 at column *126*.

Public Expenditure (EC Contribution)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated total EEC contribution to the public expenditure of £360 million listed in schedule 1 of the Integrated Operations document for Belfast presented to the EEC Commission in Brussels on 21 February.

Mr. Chris Patten: The European Community contribution will depend on the value of eligible projects and the rate of grant at which they are aided. Detailed discussions with the European Commission, on which firm estimates could be based, have yet to take place.

Abortion

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women have died as a result of illegal abortions in each year since 1967 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Year	Number
1967	Nil
1968	1
1969	1
1970	Nil
1971	1
1972	Nil
1973	Nil
1974	Nil
1975	Nil
1976	1
1977	Nil
1978	Nil
1979	1
1980	Nil
1981	Nil
1982	Nil
1983	Nil

Source: Registrar General's Office.

Assembly Members (Salaries and Allowances

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of Stat Northern Ireland how much has been paid to memb the Northern Ireland Assembly up to 31 January salaries, *(b)* in secretarial allowances and *(c)* in allowances.

Mr. Hurd: Members of the Northern Ireland Asse have received the following payments between 25 Oc 1982 and 31 January 1985:

(a) Salaries: £1,402,165
(b) Secretarial allowances: £707,319
(c) Travel allowances: £311,584

Area Health Boards

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of for Northern Ireland what is the policy of each of the health boards on providing *(a)* agendas for meeting ar confidential reports listed on these agendas to provincial newspapers in advance of the date of meetings.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is the policy of each healt social services board to make available to the agendas for board meetings, excluding confidential it in advance of meetings. Confidential reports are not available to the press.

Prison Service

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Nort Ireland if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* the cu complement of the Northern Ireland prison service, 3 March 1985 and at the same date in 1984, in term stated religion and *(b)* the stated religion of Nort Ireland prison officer casualties caused by direct att by terrorists on off-duty prison officers, during the pe 4 March 1984 to 3 March 1985; and if he will ma statement.

Mr. Scott: The complement of the Northern Ire prison service was 3,087 on 3 March 1985 and 2,94 3 March 1984. Details of the religious affiliations o members are not recorded, but we believe 7 per cen 10 per cent. are from the Catholic community.

During the year ending 3 March 1985, two membe the prison service were fatally injured when off duty result of terrorist action. One victim was reported to Protestant and the other a Catholic.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Nort Ireland how many representations he has received f members of the public with regard to the Governme proposals to limit the range of drugs available on National Health Service.

Mr. Chris Patten: Five.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State Northern Ireland whether it is his intention that the lim list of drugs prescribable on the National Health Ser in Northern Ireland should be identical to that in Engl Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 Ma 1985]: Yes. In accordance with the long standing princ of parity in the provision of health services, the same will be applied in Northern Ireland.

European Social Fund

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for grant aid under the European social fund are now due for payment to Northern Ireland companies; what is the total amount of grant aid under the European social fund for which Northern Ireland companies are eligible in respect of which application has been made for payment; and what is the normal delay between receipt of application after a qualifying period and payment of European Economic Community grant aid under the European social fund.

Dr. Boyson: Seven hundred and nineteen claims are at present approved and due for payment. The total amount of grant sought in European social fund claims currently in hand — including claims not yet approved — is approximately £3·6 million. The date of payment is dependent upon the time of receipt of the funds from the Community.

Molins Engineering Factory, Maydown

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any public funds being put into the proposed successor to the Molins engineering factory at Maydown are being paid on the same terms as funds paid to other engineering firms in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985]: Offers of selective assistance by the Industrial Development Board are tailored in form and amount to the needs of the individual project concerned. Similar basic terms and conditions apply to all offers.

RUC (Newry)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the last time, prior to the recent terrorist mortar bomb attack, that the chief constable of an assistant chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary visited Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Mr. Hurd: Newry police station was visited on 8 February 1985 by the assistant chief constable with responsibility for police operations in the area covering Newry sub-division.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the temporary fabricated buildings were first erected at Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Mr. Hurd: Temporary prefabricated buildings were first erected by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland at Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station in August 1973. Additional temporary buildings were added in 1974 and 1978, and the canteen, destroyed on 28 February, was completed in December 1984.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the last time, prior to the recent terrorist mortar bomb attack, that a member of the Northern Ireland police authority personally visited Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Mr. Hurd: Members of the Police Authority last visited Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station on 30 May 1984 as part of their planned programme of visits to Royal Ulster Constabulary stations. Individual members of the authority may have visited the station since then, but no record is kept of these personal visits.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the last time, prior to the recent terrorist attack, that a Minister of the Northern Ireland Office visited Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Newry Royal Ulster Constabulary station on 30 January 1985.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether every product in the amended limited list will meet the quality standards of the specifications in the British Pharmacopoeia.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The limited list of medicinal products in certain categories available in the National Health Service after 1 April, published by my right hon. Friend on 21 February, contains both proprietary and non-proprietary preparations. Of the non-proprietary preparations 23 are not currently the subject of monographs published in the British Pharmacopoeia. Of these 23, 12 have to meet standards published in the British Pharmaceutical Codex 1973; I understand that these are currently being reviewed by the British Pharmacopoeia commission with a view to the inclusion of monographs in a future edition of the pharmacopoeia. I also understand that the Commission is considering the preparation of monographs on the remaining 11 items.

Proprietary products are not normally covered by BP monographs, but most of those in the list contain active ingredients which are the subject of current monographs.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many products listed in his proposed list of drugs and other substances not to be made available at the National Health Service expense from 1 April do not require licences under the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The list contains a small number of items which do not come within the difinition of "medicinal product" at section 130 of the Medicines Act 1968. Mostly these will consist of products which the advisory committee on boarderline substances have said should not be prescribed on form FP10. The total number of items concerned could be extracted only at disproportionate cost but is expected to be small because the list is concerned with particular therapeutic categories.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he consulted the School of Aviation Medicine in drawing up the list of benzodiazepine preparations to be included in the limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, nor did the School of Aviation Medicine submit any comments on our proposals.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received from members of the public with regard to his proposals to limit the range of drugs available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received over 11,000 letters about the limited list proposals. About 6,500 of these were from hon. Members on behalf of constituents or directly from members of the public.

Private Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to take any action to protect residents in private residential care homes where the fees of these homes increase above the limits provided by payments from his Department.

Mr. Whitney: Supplementary benefit payments to people in all forms of board and lodging accommodation have always been subject to limits and that will remain the case when a new system of limits is introduced shortly following consultation through the social security advisory committee. As part of these changes, there will be generous transitional protection arrangements for existing claimants whose current charges are being met above the new limits. The consultative document contains no proposals to protect charges which increase above the new limits.

Ambulance Service (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps he is taking to monitor the cost to the National Health Service in terms of the time of hospital staff resulting from the reorganisation and new operating practices of the ambulance services in Newcastle upon Tyne;

(2) what steps he is taking to monitor the cost to the National Health Service of using private taxis in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne to substitute for work that was previously carried out by the ambulance service.

Mr. John Patten: These are matters for the health authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of S Social Services if he is satisfied that the closur Benton road ambulance station is in the public in the light of representations that he has received co the reorganisation of the ambulance service in Ne upon Tyne.

Mr. John Patten: We agreed to the regiona authority's proposal to close the Benton road am station after considering all the representations wh been made to us.

Leukaemia

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of S Social Services what information he has ab incidence of leukaemia on the east Dorset coast each of the last 10 years; how the figures compa the national average for the incidence of leukaem if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information is shown table. Due to delays in the receipt of data from s the regions, the latest year for which data registration of leukaemia (as opposed to deat available is 1981. Great care should be taken in t draw any worthwhile conclusion from the figures east Dorset coast, as these are based on relative cancer registrations. The age structure of the pop also has to be considered. Age-adjusted rates for Dorset coast have therefore been provided for a comparison with the national figures.

The rates for males on the east Dorset coas allowing for the age of the local population, are than the national figures for seven of the 10 years 1981. It is not possible to determine whether en recognition and registration of leukaemia in east or different diagnostic terms, account for any excess. The rates for females show smaller diffe with no excess in east Dorset greater than migh from chance variation due to small numbers of ca

Registrations of leukaemia (ICD(8)204-207, ICD(9)204-208) in east Dorset coast (County districts of Purbeck, Poole, Bournemouth a Christchurch) and rates per 100,000 population for east Dorset coast (Crude and age-adjusted) and England and Wales, 1972-81

Year	Males				Females			
	East Dorset Coast			England and Wales	East Dorset Coast			
	Number	Rate	Age-adjusted rate	rate	Number	Rate	Age-adjusted rate	
1972	6	3·9	3·0	8·4	9	5·0	3·9	
1973	28	18·3	14·0	8·5	8	4·4	3·4	
1974	13	8·5	6·4	9·1	17	9·5	7·2	
1975	25	16·2	12·4	9·0	21	11·7	8·9	
1976	24	15·5	12·0	8·8	13	7·2	5·4	
1977	17	10·9	8·3	8·7	14	7·8	5·9	
1978	24	15·4	11·6	8·9	18	10·0	7·5	
1979	26	16·6	12·4	8·9	18	10·0	7·5	
1980	28	17·7	13·2	8·4	19	10·5	7·8	
1981	25	15·7	11·7	8·8	18	9·8	7·3	

Resettlement Units

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money is estimated to be available for his recently announced plans to replace resettlement units, on an annual basis, following the closure of re-establishment centres.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated that about £2 milli become available for resettlement purposes on an basis from the closure of re-establishment centres.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of St Social Services, pursuant to the answer to th

Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 5 February, *Official Report*, column *548*, which are the resettlement units outside London which are to be closed within three years.

Mr. Whitney: The intention is to make alternative provision that will make it possible to close the following resettlement units over the next three years:

Alvaston, Derby
Bishopbriggs, Glasgow
Brighton
Fazakerley, Liverpool
Plawsworth, Co. Durham
Stormy Down, Bridgend
Walkden, Manchester
Winterbourne, Bristol

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the animals now cared for in national reassessment centres; and what plans he has for their location following the closure of the centres.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 March 1985, c. *338*]: In this Department's 23 resettlement units there are 15 cats, two dogs, a goat, a donkey, a guinea pig and varying quantities of rabbits, poultry, cage birds and fish. When the units close, these animals will be offered to staff, pet shops or farms as appropriate.

Drugs (Licences)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 17,000 products listed in the Prescription Pricing Authority's master drug index do not require licences under the Medicines Act.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Some items included in the Prescription Pricing Authority's master drug index are "borderline" substances which doctors can in certain circumstances prescribe under the NHS even though they are not "medicinal products" under the terms of section 130 of the Medicines Act 1968. The exact number is not readily available and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Flora Margarine

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the manufacturers of Flora margarine as a result of his withdrawing that product from National Health Service prescribing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Computers

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to increase the number of computers used in social security offices; and what assessments he intends to make of the possible effects this could have on his Department's manpower levels.

Mr. Whitney: Our plans for the application of new technology to social security are embraced within our operational strategy for social security, which provides a managerial and conceptual framework for a number of individual computer projects. The first of these to be introduced to the Department's local offices will be the local office microcomputer project, which will provide support to staff dealing with supplementary benefit. In total, some 2,600 microcomputers will be installed in over 450 offices. National implementation is scheduled to begin this summer and be completed within a year. At an earlier stage of planning is the local office project, which will link social security local offices into a national network. On current plans national implementation of LOP will commence in 1988-89. We expect these investments to improve markedly the service we provide for beneficiaries. The methods to assess the staffing implications of the changes will be discussed with the departmental trade unions. Discussions on LOMP are taking place at the present time.

Hypothermia

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to reduce the number of deaths resulting from hypothermia.

Mr. John Patten: Death resulting from hypothermia is relatively rare: it was mentioned as a cause of death in 539 of a total of 579,608 deaths in England and Wales during 1983. We have extended entitlement to regular weekly additional help with heating costs, which now goes automatically to all supplementary pensioner householders over 65. We also encourage and support the Health Education Council's activities to make advice and guidance on all aspects of keeping warm widely available.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he intends to have with Health Ministers in the United States Government about measures taken by them to combat acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus in the United States of America.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our officials have been in regular contact with officials of the Government of the United States of America, and staff of public health service and communicable disease centres, to keep up to date with the measures being taken in that country to combat AIDS. We intend to continue this contact.

Management Information System

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will name and describe the different types of regular report made from local offices as part of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Whitney: The main elements of the management information system used by the regional organisation are returns made by each local office at four-weekly and quarterly intervals showing work load data for contributory and supplementary benefits together with the manpower resources used. The four-weekly returns are made on forms MR150 (contributory benefit), MR250/251 (supplementary benefit) and MR650 (contributory and supplementary benefit); form MR351 is used for all of the quarterly returns. This regular information is supplemented by ad hoc inquiries when necessary.

Work load data include the number of claims received, the volume of work processed and the number of payments made. The four-weekly reports also include an assessment of performance based on a series of performance indicators covering the most significant areas of work. There are at present eight performance indicators for contributory

benefit and six for supplementary benefit work. Two of the indicators monitor the accuracy of short-term contributory benefit payments (eg sickness benefit) and supplementary benefit payments; the others monitor the amount of work cleared. The staffing information gives a breakdown of the manpower resources which were available and includes, for example, overtime and staff absences because of sickness, leave, and so on.

Pharmaceutical Companies

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the recent reductions in return on investment guidelines discriminate against pharmaceutical companies with higher capital investment and research activity in the United Kingdom;

(2) what account he took of the differing levels of *(a)* capital investment and *(b)* research activity by pharmaceutical companies when deciding on the level of price reductions to impose under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: While it is true that generally the profit targets of such companies have been reduced by the greatest amount, they remain higher than those of companies with little capital investment or research activity in the United Kingdom. The lower overall profit target for the pharmaceutical industry under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme inevitably led to some compression of the range of individual company targets.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died of end stage renal failure in each of the last five years; and, of these, how many had received *(a)* transplants and *(b)* dialysis treatment.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected centrally.

Pharmaceuticals (Prices)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the reduction in pharmaceutical exports which will be caused by the proposed price reductions in pharmaceutical prices which are to be effective from 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 7 December 1984 at column *320*.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of retirement pensioners in Scotland in receipt of the 25p age addition, analysed by category and age.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is shown in the table:

Age of pensioner	*With contributory basic retirement pension*	*With non-contributory retirement pension*	*A*
80-84	84·4	1·6	
85-89	37·1	1·3	
90-94	10·9	0·7	
95-99	1·9	0·4	
100 and over	0·2	0·1	
Total	134·4	4·1	

Medical Students (Revenue Contributi

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Social Services what yield has been gained by t services of the National Health Service during e last four years resulting from revenue contribut postgraduate medical students from outside t Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke There is no direct rev to NHS clinical services from such students.

Postneonatal Mortality

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of Social Services what action he proposes in repo report entitled "A Multi-Centre Study of Po Mortality", by the Medical Care Research U University of Sheffield, which claims that in 1 cases of postneonatal mortality where a practitioner had been in contact with the dead i case conference found that the general practit acted inappropriately in 64 per cent. of cases; now update his response to those sections of t reports of the Social Services Committee, Secon Session 1979-80 and Third Report, Session relating to the quality of training provided fo practitioners wishing to practise obstetrics; and make a statement.

Mr. John Patten We have invited expe conference on 15 March at which the conclus recommendations of the multi-centre study discussed. We hope to have their news on posi that can be taken to reduce postneonatal mortality to improve the quality of infant care, where n Discussions about the training and other cri admission of general practitioners to the obstetri continuing at official level with the profession concerned. There is nothing further to add to the given to the relevant recommendations in th Services Committee's two reports.

Public Health Laboratory Service

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of Social Services what was the cost of the survey ca on the public health laboratory service by inspectorate of the executive and personnel divisi Department.

Mr. John Patten The total cost is estimated to £135,000.

Factor VIII

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what applications he has received to vary product licences in respect of imported heat-treated factor VIII; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke Three existing licences for factor VIII have been varied to provide for the inclusion of heat treatment during manufacture and the new licences to which I referred in my reply of 20 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) at columns *498-500* have now been granted.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evaluation has been made by his Department of the relative economics of self-sufficiency and continued importation of factor VIII products; and if he will make the results public.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 19 February, at columns *446-7*.

Haemophilia Society

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what applications he has received for financial assistance from the Haemophilia Society in respect of case funding; what response he has given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No application for case funding has been received. In response to a more general application for financial assistance, we have given the Haemophilia Society a non-recurring grant of £15,000 this year to help meet its expenditure on AIDS-related information and advice activities.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated incidence of serious brain damage following measles vaccination.

Mr. John Patten: Serious neurological reaction to measles vaccine has been estimated to occur in 1 in 87,000 injections. Nearly all the children suffering a serious reaction recover fully with no permanent damage as a result.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases he is aware of when parents of brain damaged children have been precluded from claiming under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act, because they were outside the time limit set by the Act; and if he will take steps to investigate how common a problem this is, and the nature of the reasons for parents not applying earlier.

Mr. John Patten: The time limits set by the Act first came into effect on 9 May 1984. Since then claims have had to be made within six years of the date of vaccination or the disabled person's second birthday. To date 16 claims have been disallowed because they were not made within these time limits.

The time limits have been explained in the current and all previous editions of the Department's leaflet HB3, entitled "Payment for Severe Vaccine Damage," and the 9 May time limit was publicised in February 1984 issue of the Department's periodical bulletin "Social Secu Notes," which is circulated widely among volunt organisations. I explained the time limits in my reply my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Y on 10 April 1984 at column *208*.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services what action his Department has taken to ens that those parents whose children suffer brain damage af measles vaccination are made aware of the existence of vaccine damage payments scheme and the possibility t their child may be entitled to a payment under the Ac

Mr. John Patten: On publicity generally I refer right hon. Member to my reply today to his question ab our advice to health authorities on this subject. T scheme applies equally to vaccination against a numbe diseases. No additional steps have been taken specifica in relation to measles vaccination.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services what advice his Department has given to hea authorities and the medical profession regarding inform parents of brain damaged children of the vaccine dama payments scheme, when medical opinion is t vaccination is a possible cause of the brain damage.

Mr. John Patten: The Department issued health not (79)7 and local authority social services letter (79)1 January 1979 informing health and local authorities of introduction of the scheme and asking them to bring it the notice of staff and others working with possi beneficiaries so that they could ensure that those entit to submit claims were informed of the arrangements. T notice and letter are still current. The Department tries ensure that its leaflet on the scheme is widely available places where potential claimants are likely to seek h including social services departments, hospitals, citiz advice bureaux and voluntary organisations. T readership of the Department's periodical bulletin, "Soc Security Notes", which is widely circulated amo voluntary organisations, was also reminded of the sche when the introduction of the time limits set by the Act w publicised in the February 1984 issue.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services if he will uprate the £4 earnings limit for pers in receipt of supplementary benefit in such a way as restore the value it had in 1975.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to do so, but treatment of earnings was one of the matters considered the supplementary benefit review last year. We shall announcing the proposals arising from the review in c course.

Prescriptions

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Soc Services what was the average net ingredient cost prescription item dispensed by retail pharmacists a appliance institutions in England in each year since 19 not at constant prices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is follows for the years 1975 to 1983, the latest year which information is available.

Year	£
1975	0·940
1976	1·173
1977	1·469
1978	1·686
1979	1·944
1980	2·360
1981	2·782
1982	3·140
1983	3·476

Macclesfield Health Authority

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to make a decision relating to the early retirement of the chief administrator of Macclesfield district health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Shortly.

NHS (Senior Administrators)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the last meeting at which he was scheduled to discuss early retirement of senior administrators within the National Health Service was postponed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The general question of early retirement arising out of the introduction of the general management function has been discussed on a number of occasions and is still under consideration.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many senior administrators in the National Health Service have now indicated a wish to take early retirement following the introduction of managers to the service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Health authorities are still reviewing their structures following the appointment of general managers and most have not yet made application for the early retirement of other staff. It is therefore too soon to say how many senior administrators will wish to retire early.

Opticians (Prescriptions)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take action to ensure that opticians do not impede their customers' right to purchase spectacle frames in the private sector by denying or obstructing their right to be provided with a prescription.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: From 1 April 1985 the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Service) Amendment Regulations 1985 (SI 1985, No. 298) will require opticians to give a copy of the prescription to patients in all cases where they need glasses. The optician sho give the copy without making any cha practitioner who does not comply with th will be in breach of his terms of service disciplinary action under service committe regulations.

GPs (Private Prescriptions)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of S Services whether he has considered seek general practitioners from issuing private p Health Service patients for those items not list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The drugs left prescription on the National Health Servic clinical needs in the therapeutic categories proposals. There will therefore be no medi doctor to prescribe an item not on the lis patient elects to have a private prescriptio will be a matter of choice and we see no rea general practitioners issuing such prescripti

Sickle Cell Disease

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of Sta Services whether he will increase his Depar to the national voluntary organisations hel from sickle cell disease.

Mr. John Patten: We are well aware of role played by the national voluntary organis counselling the population at risk of sickle ce in spreading greater awareness of this condit professions and the general public. I ha decided to increase the grants given Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Rese Sickle Cell Society for 1984-85 to £12,00 represents an increase of 50 per cent. over th 1983-84.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of Sta Services if he will give for 30 September 1984 region and each special health authority a governors the total number of consultants hol time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other p *(d)* honorary contracts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to* 21 January 1985, c. *334*]: An updated versio that I sent to the hon. Member last July fo 1984 Queen Charlotte's BG has m Hammersmith BG to form Hammersmith Charlotte's special health authority.

Number of consultant contracts for each RHA, SHA and BG 1970-84

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Northern													
Total	715	723	688	693	771	785	806	807	825	835	844	867	886
Total paid	631	636	606	623	713	725	746	754	767	775	782	805	822
Whole-time	373	395	392	418	471	491	515	510	530	530	563	583	600
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	206	186	183	179
Part-time	258	241	214	205	242	234	231	244	237	39	33	39	43
Honorary	84	87	82	70	58	60	60	53	58	60	62	62	64

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Yorkshire														
Total	646	657	688	698	756	779	812	814	825	846	852	898	909	925
Total paid	585	611	640	650	712	729	754	752	764	780	786	822	834	848
Whole-time	222	243	269	289	337	366	379	376	385	389	414	441	470	492
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	368	349	358	340	331
Part-time	363	368	371	361	375	363	375	376	379	23	23	23	24	25
Honorary	61	46	48	48	44	50	58	62	61	66	66	76	75	77
Trent														
Total	741	755	791	838	791	809	874	906	937	981	1,017	1,047	1,078	1,096
Total paid	683	698	725	761	722	731	779	806	838	872	904	927	956	975
Whole-time	306	323	341	379	371	381	431	452	470	490	537	568	594	609
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	186	266	283	310	315
Part-time	377	375	384	382	351	350	348	354	368	196	101	76	52	51
Honorary	58	57	66	77	69	78	95	100	99	109	113	120	122	121
East Anglia														
Total	376	393	403	440	388	407	435	435	454	469	484	498	508	515
Total paid	343	360	373	412	369	384	402	401	419	430	440	453	463	471
Whole-time	144	158	166	204	190	206	224	221	233	232	247	257	268	275
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	184	169	169	169	167
Part-time	199	202	207	208	179	178	178	180	186	14	24	27	26	29
Honorary	33	33	30	28	19	23	33	34	35	39	44	45	45	44
North West Thames														
Total	1,411	1,474	1,516	1,541	1,223	1,247	1,266	1,267	1,275	1,288	1,284	1,287	1,119	1,154
Total paid	1,203	1,218	1,233	1,248	960	971	984	984	980	975	984	987	929	953
Whole-time	252	259	283	309	282	294	315	302	285	289	307	315	322	361
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	293	372	385	386	375
Part-time	951	959	950	939	678	677	669	682	695	393	305	287	221	217
Honorary	208	256	283	293	263	276	282	283	295	313	300	300	190	201
North East Thames														
Total	877	891	903	938	1,239	1,246	1,270	1,278	1,289	1,293	1,305	1,320	1,511	1,546
Total paid	799	811	820	854	1,086	1,092	1,093	1,079	1,074	1,072	1,076	1,093	1,222	1,232
Whole-time	234	246	261	278	319	329	335	341	333	334	358	380	422	444
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	402	456	450	479	464
Part-time	565	565	559	576	767	763	758	738	741	336	262	263	321	324
Honorary	78	80	83	84	153	154	177	199	215	221	229	227	289	314
South East Thames														
Total	1,032	1,037	1,045	1,099	1,082	1,106	1,131	1,121	1,147	1,145	1,147	1,154	1,170	1,193
Total paid	908	917	926	951	951	971	993	982	995	994	998	1,010	1,015	1,030
Whole-time	226	240	261	281	290	318	346	345	356	363	394	408	430	467
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	234	398	403	391	381
Part-time	682	677	665	670	661	653	647	637	639	397	206	199	194	182
Honorary	124	120	119	148	131	135	138	139	152	151	149	144	155	163
South West Thames														
Total	778	764	769	769	794	815	842	859	880	881	898	930	897	904
Total paid	707	695	690	691	734	757	773	780	790	787	797	815	788	803
Whole-time	199	204	206	221	258	272	283	290	290	286	300	319	313	326
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	208	348	357	344	348
Part-time	508	491	484	470	476	485	490	490	500	293	149	139	131	129
Honorary	71	69	79	78	60	58	69	79	90	94	101	115	109	101
Wessex														
Total	373	390	410	433	596	620	638	656	667	685	701	689	699	728
Total paid	362	371	384	402	555	574	592	610	616	625	627	611	620	643
Whole-time	146	148	155	164	236	267	286	299	301	304	321	317	331	344
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	264	258	248	250	259
Part-time	216	223	229	238	319	307	306	311	315	57	48	46	39	40
Honorary	11	19	26	31	41	46	46	46	51	60	74	78	79	85
Oxford														
Total	452	471	484	536	513	523	538	538	533	545	568	585	610	620
Total paid	412	427	433	460	459	469	483	488	485	492	505	517	535	542
Whole-time	147	156	182	212	190	203	207	211	203	206	228	243	252	245
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	230	234	233	239	254
Part-time	265	271	251	248	269	266	276	277	282	56	43	41	44	43
Honorary	40	44	51	76	54	54	55	50	48	53	63	68	75	78
South Western														
Total	666	691	712	753	662	663	685	688	703	745	769	781	802	808
Total paid	617	638	656	692	616	616	638	644	654	695	718	724	737	742
Whole-time	219	237	260	287	277	288	322	329	341	349	374	392	401	403

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	148	309	296	303	308	308
Part-time	398	401	396	405	339	328	316	315	313	198	35	36	33	31	34
Honorary	49	53	56	61	36	47	47	44	49	50	51	57	65	66	66
West Midlands															
Total	997	1,036	1,052	1,104	1,094	1,107	1,121	1,118	1,142	1,184	1,201	1,226	1,250	1,276	1,321
Total paid	991	942	979	1,031	1,036	1,048	1,059	1,058	1,080	1,115	1,130	1,152	1,167	1,186	1,229
Whole-time	411	431	482	525	547	558	581	586	597	617	640	665	699	705	718
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	283	403	404	405	422	462
Part-time	500	511	497	506	489	490	478	472	483	215	87	83	63	59	49
Honorary	86	94	73	73	58	59	62	60	62	69	71	74	83	90	92
Mersey															
Total	605	620	624	628	586	606	621	622	631	644	652	649	656	666	683
Total paid	529	538	536	541	530	550	562	554	554	566	573	574	580	587	606
Whole-time	202	210	230	238	236	260	273	278	289	306	329	336	358	367	368
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	85	198	193	181	181	206
Part-time	327	328	306	303	294	290	289	276	265	175	46	45	41	39	32
Honorary	76	82	88	87	56	56	59	68	77	78	79	75	76	79	77
North Western															
Total	856	882	920	962	920	958	991	1,026	1,049	1,078	1,095	1,130	1,173	1,207	1,226
Total paid	786	803	833	875	850	879	903	933	949	973	993	1,021	1,060	1,093	1,111
Whole-time	263	288	325	363	365	391	425	439	454	475	504	548	597	603	634
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	241	427	415	406	403	420
Part-time	523	515	508	512	485	488	478	494	495	257	62	58	57	60	57
Honorary	70	79	87	87	70	79	88	93	100	105	102	109	113	114	115
Special Health Authorities Boards of Governors															
Hammersmith															
Total	129	125	134	130	Incorporated into North West Thames RHA								117	133	171
Total paid	32	34	35	23									33	37	63
Whole-time	12	12	14	16									9	22	31
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—									—	—	—
Part-time	20	22	21	7									24	15	32
Honorary	97	91	99	107									84	96	108
Sick Children															
Total	74	84	85	93	100	106	108	113	118	120	123	122	116	122	116
Total paid	61	66	65	56	61	63	64	68	71	70	70	69	64	66	63
Whole-time	10	12	11	11	16	16	18	20	19	20	21	23	21	23	21
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	51	54	54	45	45	47	46	48	52	50	49	46	43	43	42
Honorary	13	18	20	37	39	43	44	45	47	50	53	53	52	56	53
Nervous Diseases															
Total	67	70	73	73	65	66	65	67	67	69	69	72	72	65	58
Total paid	51	53	54	53	50	50	48	49	49	50	50	47	48	46	40
Whole-time	10	10	10	10	9	11	10	11	11	10	10	9	11	12	12
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	41	43	44	43	41	39	38	38	38	40	40	38	37	34	28
Honorary	16	17	19	20	15	16	17	18	18	19	19	25	24	19	18
Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat															
Total	45	44	42	43	42	41	41	39	37	42	41	37	Incorporated into North West Thames RHA		
Total paid	37	37	36	37	37	36	36	35	33	34	33	32			
Whole-time	2	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	6	7			
Maximum part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
Part-time	35	34	32	34	34	33	32	31	29	29	27	25			
Honorary	8	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	8	8	5			
Moorfields															
Total	39	35	38	37	65	73	72	56	56	55	55	60	58	55	51
Total paid	36	32	35	33	51	56	53	39	39	39	39	43	42	40	35
Whole-time	—	—	1	2	5	4	2	3	1	2	2	4	4	5	2
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	36	32	34	31	46	52	51	36	38	37	37	39	38	35	33
Honorary	3	3	3	4	14	17	19	17	17	16	16	17	16	15	16
Beth. and Mond.															
Total	60	62	62	64	62	63	65	66	74	82	78	79	77	80	79
Total paid	34	33	35	35	35	35	34	33	39	40	37	39	36	36	36
Whole-time	11	11	13	15	14	14	15	15	16	17	18	20	19	20	20
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	23	22	22	20	21	21	19	18	23	23	19	19	17	16	16

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Honorary	26	29	27	29	27	28	31	33	35	42	41	40	41	44	43
St. John's															
Total	17	20	20	19	18	18	18	19	19	19	22	22			
Total paid	11	12	12	13	13	13	13	14	15	14	16	16		Incorporated	
Whole-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	4	4	4		into South	
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		East Thames	
Part-time	11	12	12	13	13	13	12	13	14	10	12	12		RHA	
Honorary	6	8	8	6	5	5	5	5	4	5	6	6			
Dis. of Chest															
Total	51														
Total paid	49														
Whole-time	6		Merged with												
Maximum Part-time	—		National Heart												
Part-time	43		BG												
Honorary	2														
Royal National Orthopaedic															
Total	43	43	42	40	42	44	44	48	48	49	50	54			
Total paid	37	35	35	33	32	35	35	35	36	39	40	45		Incorporated	
Whole-time	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	5		into North	
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		West Thames	
Part-time	36	33	32	31	30	33	32	33	34	36	36	40		RHA	
Honorary	6	8	7	7	10	9	9	13	12	10	10	9			
National Heart & Chest															
Total	20	71	69	72	76	73	75	75	78	81	81	83	84	87	87
Total paid	16	65	64	66	67	65	67	68	66	70	69	71	72	75	73
Whole-time	1	12	14	15	15	12	14	14	16	17	15	18	23	28	29
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	15	53	50	51	52	53	53	54	50	53	54	53	49	47	44
Honorary	4	6	5	6	9	8	8	7	12	11	12	12	12	12	14
St. Peter's															
Total	21	22	22	22	18	18	22	23	26	34	35	37			
Total paid	20	21	21	21	17	16	17	18	18	20	20	20		Incorporated	
Whole-time	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	2	1	2	2	2		into North	
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		West Thames	
Part-time	19	20	20	20	17	15	16	16	17	18	18	18		RHA	
Honorary	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	5	8	14	15	17			
Royal Marsden															
Total	46	49	53	48	51	56	56	55	60	60	56	56	53	52	61
Total paid	39	38	37	38	42	46	46	45	47	47	45	44	41	41	49
Whole-time	7	7	8	9	11	13	14	14	14	13	12	11	9	9	15
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	32	31	29	29	31	33	32	31	33	34	33	33	32	32	34
Honorary	7	11	16	10	9	10	10	10	13	13	11	12	12	11	12
Queen Charlotte's															
Total	37	34	34	35	36	36	34	31	30	28	27	32	30	31	
Total paid	31	28	27	28	29	28	26	24	24	24	24	29	27	28	Merged
Whole-time	4	4	3	3	3	5	6	6	7	7	7	9	9	10	with
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ham-
Part-time	27	24	24	25	26	23	20	18	17	17	17	20	18	18	mer-
Honorary	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	7	6	4	3	3	3	3	smith
															BG
Eastman Dent.															
Total	28	26	26	31	31	34	31	32	29	33	32	33	33	32	32
Total paid	14	13	13	13	14	16	13	16	16	17	18	18	19	18	18
Whole-time	8	8	6	7	8	10	8	10	10	8	9	10	10	10	10
Maximum Part-time	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	6	5	7	6	6	6	5	6	6	9	9	8	9	8	8
Honorary	14	13	13	18	17	18	18	16	13	16	14	15	14	14	14

General Notes:

1. Senior Hospital Medical/Dental Officers (with allowance) are included in the consultant figures.
2. Analyses of maximum part-time contracts are not available prior to 1970. For SHAs/BGs maximum part-time figures are not readily available for any year. Where MPT figures are not shown the contracts have been included with the part-time figures.
3. There is some duplication in the figures due to some consultants holding contracts in more than one region and/or with more than one SHA/BG.
4. There were boundary changes in the 1974 NHS reorganisation which will effect comparisons between 1973-74. There were also boundary changes in 1982 which particularly affected North West, North East and South West Thames regions.
5. In 1984 Queen Charlotte's BG merged with Hammersmith BG to form Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Special Health Authority.

Spastics Society (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter sent to him on 22 January by Sir John Cox of the Spastics Society and others about the special programme funding of social services, together with his reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 15 February 1985, c. *319*]: The letter of 22 January from the Voluntary Organisations Personal Social Services Group and my reply are as follows:

"Dear Mr. Fowler,

RE: Special Programme Funding of Social Services

The Voluntary Organisations Personal Social Services Group is a group of directors of major voluntary organisations involved in the provision of care and support for people who are crucially dependent on personal social services.

In recent years our agencies have cooperated with government in a succession of 'special programmes'—for example the opportunities for volunteering scheme and the community programme of the Manpower Services Commission. A feature of these programmes has been the provision of special funds from central government, largely channelled through voluntary bodies such as our own. These schemes have been nicknamed 'funny money' programmes by the local authorities. Many of us have participated in these programmes, which have enabled much needed attention to be given to new priorities, experimental or innovative work. We are now concerned at the long term effects of the cuts to local government expenditure on services for our users, especially in the areas affected by large rate penalties, rate-capping and the abolition of the metropolitan authorities. We examine these programmes in this context.

The belief has grown up that some see 'special programme' funding as sugaring the pill of the cuts, or worse, setting up alternative provision to local authority services. Our concern was increased by your speech at the conference of the Association of Directors of Social Services in Buxton in 1984. You appeared to see the future role of local authority social service departments as concerned less with direct service provision than with coordinating private or voluntary services provided by other agencies.

Our view is that, even if the amounts of money were increased dramatically, these programmes could not and should not replace the existing range of services provided by the local authorities. Our welcome for these programmes is therefore qualified by the need for a clear understanding between all parties involved that they:—

i. are seen as supplementary to and not a replacement for the mainstream local authority services;
ii. are used primarily to enable the voluntary sector to concentrate on innovation, development, experimentation, and in the provision of wider informal services;
iii. are developed in such a way as to guarantee local authorities sufficient resources to act on the lessons and experience of these special programmes and to develop services accordingly;
iv. are recognised as short term in nature with all the limitations of such funding.

Voluntary organisations want a planned and close working partnership with local government. This may be a misunderstood concept but one thing it must not mean is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

We hope you will note our serious concerns, and we look forward to hearing from you as to your policy for the future funding of the personal social services.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the following major national voluntary organisations.

Sir John Cox—Spastics Society
George Wilson—RADAR
Brian Rix—Royal MENCAP
Clive Jordan—BASSAC
Tim Cook—Family Service Unit
Carol Smart—National Council for One Parent Families
Valerie Lipman—Pensioners LINK
Elizabeth Filkin—NACAB
Paul Sommerfeld—LVSC
Chris Heginbotham—MIND
R. Morley—Family Welfare Association
Bill Griffiths—NCVO

"Dear Sir John,

Thank you for the letter you and your colleagues in the Voluntary Organisations Personal Social Services Group sent Norman Fowler on 22 January about 'special programme' funding of social services.

Essentially, I see services provided by voluntary organisations as adding to the range of services provided by local and health authorities rather than as a substitute for them. Central government funding of national voluntary organisations is intended both to strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector to provide services and to give an opportunity to test whether a different mix of voluntary and statutory provision would make a better use of resources. As you point out, at local level central government funding schemes are primarily designed to achieve this by concentrating on innovative, developmental or experimental projects. If this approach is to make sense, it also follows that such central government support to a local project will by its nature be short term rather than permanent. However, I recognise the weight of the argument of the voluntary sector that an innovative local project will often need assurance of funding for two or three years if it is going to be able to establish its merits effectively. I have, for instance, taken this into account in the schemes being developed under the Helping the Community to Care programme, and in the proposals in the consultation paper which I published at the end of last year on the future of the Opportunities for Volunteering programme.

You suggest that a guarantee is needed that local authorities will have sufficient resources to act on the lessons and experience of central government funded projects. As you will know, local authorities decide their own priorities between the various services they provide, and the Government takes account of demographic and similar pressures on the personal social services in the Rate Support Grant settlements. Where experience shows that a centrally funded project involving a voluntary organisation can provide cost effective services, we would expect local authorities to take account of this when deciding their pattern of services.

I hope that you find this explanation helpful."

Tumour Necrosis Factor

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to sponsor or promote research in the United Kingdom into the substance known as tumour necrosis factor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend's practice is to give the MRC its grant-in-aid without direction as to how it should be allocated between its various fields of work.

I understand from the MRC that it has provided approximately £267,000 through its grant schemes to support work using the substance known as human tumour necrosis factor. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through its research grant schemes in competition with other applications.

It is possible that research work involving the use of tumour necrosis factor is also being conducted in universities and medical schools using funds allocated for teaching and reseach on the advice of the University Grants Committee, but no details of such work are available. The medical charities may also be funding research in these fields.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about research into the substance known as tumour necrosis factor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that there has been interest in tumour necrosis factor (TNF) since the early seventies, but progress into research has been hampered by difficulties with its purification. The recent announcement that the gene for human TNF has been cloned in *E Coli* is a significant step forward. It should enable sufficient supplies of pure TNF to be made available for further laboratory studies and, subsequently, for trials of its use for therapeutic purposes.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8th March 1985

TRANSPORT

Irish Lights (Costs)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the costs of the Commissioners of Irish Lights is now borne by shipping calling at United Kingdom ports; if he will express the amount in £ sterling; and what steps have been taken, or undertakings given, by the Government of the Irish Republic in response to representations made by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that such costs of the Commissioners as are generated within the Republic should be paid for there.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Commissioners' expenditure is met from the general lighthouse fund, which is derived from light dues paid by shipping using ports in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. In 1984-85 the forecast outturn of the Commissioners' expenditure is £10 million. Light dues collected in the Republic's ports in 1984-85 are expected to be about £1 million. On that basis about 90 per cent. of the Commissioners' expenditure will be derived, via the fund, from light dues paid by shipping in the United Kingdom, including, of course, Northern Ireland.

The Irish Government have accepted that a larger part of the costs incurred in the Republic by the Commissioners should be met from sources within the Republic, and negotiations to establish the amount are continuing between the Governments.

British Rail (Public Service Obligation Grant)

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has settled the amount of the public service obligation grant to be paid to the British Railways Board from January 1984 to March 1985.

Mr. Ridley: I am glad to announce that I have accepted the board's claim for central Government PSO grant for the 15-month period 1 January 1984 to 31 March 1985 at £1,051·8 million, subject to adjustment for certain factors agreed with the board.

The claim normally covers a 12-month period. British Rail is however, changing its annual accounting period from a calendar to a fiscal year basis with effect from 1 April 1985. I have therefore agreed that the grant for 1984, which I announced on 7 June 1984, should be extended to cover the 15-month period.

The claim is £36·2 million less than the cash limit of £1,088 million which I announced on 6 December. The claim continues to reflect the board's progress towards achieving the 1986 grant target.

Of the total grant claim, about £210 million is in respect of the board's inter-city business, £338 million for the London and south-east sector and £504 million for provincial services, excluding those financed separately by the passenger transport executives.

WALES

Oxygen Therapy Service

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients in Wales are supplied with oxygen by community pharmacists or through their own general practitioner; what is the cost of the service; how many of these patients would be classified as requiring major therapy and how many would be classified as requiring occasional use therapy; and how many patients in each of these categories use cylinder oxygen and how many use concentrators.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At 30 September 1984, 6,026 patients were being supplied with oxygen by community pharmacists or by their own general practitioner. Of these, 143 patients would be regarded as requiring major therapy; a further 302 patients were supplied on a regular basis; and 5,581 were regarded as receiving occasional use therapy. All these patients were supplied by cylinder oxygen. The cost of the oxygen service in Wales for that month was almost £122,000.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average sums paid in rates by domestic ratepayers in Wales, gross and net of rate rebates, in each year since 1977-78.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The average sum paid by domestic ratepayers gross and net of rate rebates in each year since 1977-78 is as follows:

	Gross £	*Net of Rate Rebates* £
1977-78	68	64
1978-79	77	72
1979-80	97	91
1980-81	128	119
1981-82	155	143
*1982-83	184	165
1983-84	186	147
1984-85	201	160

* From 1982-83 domestic rate relief was 18·5p/£ compared with 36p/£ in the earlier years shown.

Figures from 1982-83 onwards are not comparable with the earlier years for the average sum paid net of rate rebates because of the introduction of the housing benefit scheme. Rate rebates paid to supplementary benefit recipients are included for local authority tenants from November 1982 and for all recipients from April 1983. Equivalent sums paid to supplementary benefit recipients under previous arrangements are not included.

Rating Revaluation

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Wales in which years since 1955 there has been a rating revaluation in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: 1956, 1963 and 1973.

Skimmed Milk (Intervention Stocks)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of skimmed milk presently stored in

European Community intervention stocks in Bedwas; and if he will compare this figure with those for three, six and 12 months ago, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information cannot be released on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

EMPLOYMENT

School Leavers

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walthamstow on 18 February, *Official Report*, column 351, about the educational attainment of unemployed school leavers, if a similar breakdown can be provided for unemployed school leavers *(a)* from the ethnic minorities, *(b)* from the Greater London area and *(c)* from the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following is the available information using final results of the 1983 labour force survey, including revisions to the figures given in my earlier reply of 18 February. The estimates are subject to sampling errors, which are greater for the ethnic minorities and for Greater London than for national totals. Corresponding figures are not available for Waltham Forest.

Unemployed people aged 16 or over who have never had a job since leaving full-time education, by highest qualification

Percentage

Highest qualification	*Great Britain*		*Greater London*
	All	*Ethnic minorities*	
None	46	39	37
CSE (below grade 1) or equivalent	17	25	18
O-level or equivalent	22	17	22
A-level or higher	15	18	22
All qualifications	100	100	100
(Number: thousands)	(507)	(46)	(52)

Hairdressing Trainees (West Midlands)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the available figures for the last two years of hairdressing establishments in the west midlands showing *(a)* the numbers of hairdressing trainees who entered training under the youth training scheme, *(b)* the number of hairdressing trainees who entered training as first year apprentices, *(c)* the number of youth training scheme hairdressing trainees who were subsequently employed under the young workers scheme and *(d)* the numbers of youth training scheme hairdressing trainees who entered second year apprentice training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is not available.

Youth Training Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give an estimate for the increased take-up of youth training scheme places when young workers scheme places became restricted to 17-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At the beginning of 1984, it was expected that there might be between 15,000 and 35,000 additional entrants to the youth training scheme in 1984-85 as a result of the changes in the eligibility conditions of the young workers scheme.

However, it is difficult to estimate what the effects of the changes in the rules have actually been, because many factors affect the number of entrants to the youth training scheme, and it is not possible to identify separately the contribution made by the changes in the eligibility conditions of the young workers scheme.

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for the youth training scheme in 1985-86.

Mr. Tom King: The Manpower Services Commission has submitted to me its recommendations for the scale and balance of provision for the youth training scheme in 1985-86 and the level of the grants and allowances.

I have approved the commission's recommendation that the youth training scheme in 1985-86 should be a programme of 379,000 places, comprising 297,000 mode A, 68,000 mode B1 and 14,000 mode B2 places. This should provide sufficient places for all eligible young people who are likely to come forward.

As regards grants to mode A managing agents, I have approved the commission's recommendations that the managing agent's fee should be increased from £100 to £110 per place from 1 April and that the contribution to training costs should be increased from £637.50 to £660 from 1 September. I have also approved the commission's recommendations for increases in the mode B grants in line with the mode A increases.

I have not yet made any decision on the level of the trainee allowance, which was increased to £26·25 per week in September 1984, but I have informed the commission that any increase in the allowance will result in a corresponding increase in the mode A block grant.

Girocheques

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Employment in what circumstances his Department makes ex gratia payments to replace girocheques issued by his Department's local offices which are subsequently stolen.

Mr. Alan Clark: Local offices of the Department of Employment's unemployment benefit service act on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security in paying unemployment benefit. My Department will replace a girobank cheque for unemployment benefit which is reported stolen after receipt, or which is believed to have been stolen before receipt, provided there is no evidence that it has been cashed by the intended recipient or a member of his household.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by postal code district, for the east London postal districts E1 to E18 inclusive, the latest unemployment figures; and if he will show for each of these postal code districts the change in unemployment over the preceding 12-month period.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is not available in the form requested.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of people employed full-time in manufacturing industry in *(a)* the west midlands, *(b)* the Black Country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area in May 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment and is as follows:

Employees in full-time employment: Manufacturing industries

	June 1978 (thousands)	*September 1981 (thousands)*
West Midlands	916·7	743·6
Dudley and Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall travel-to-work areas	268·5	213·3
Walsall travel-to-work area	65·8	55·3

As results of the 1978 census are not available for the new travel-to-work areas announced last year, information is given for the travel-to-work areas as defined before last year's review.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received concerning the access of employees to nursery provision.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Average Incomes

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the average national income for all individuals of the age of 16 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information on income from employment relates to the average gross weekly earnings in April 1984 of full-time employees aged 16 years on 1 January 1984 and are published in table 186 of "New Earnings Survey 1984," part F, a copy of which is in the Library.

National Freight Warehouse, Sheffield

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied that a thorough investigation is being carried out into the fire at the National Freight warehouse, Brightside Lane, Sheffield.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Health and Safety Executive, in co-operation with the local authority environmental health department, local fire brigade and local fire authority, is preparing a thorough-going report into the causes of the fire and the precautions taken against exposure. The investigating team will draw on the expertise of Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate, the employment medical advisory service and the Health and Safety Executive's research and laboratory services division. The report will be published.

PRIME MINISTER

Henry Newton

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the late Henry Newton was at any time employed by Her Majesty's Government after May 1979; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I understand that certain allegations have been made about the existence of links between Mr. Newton, the security service and special branches. It is not the practice to comment on allegations of this nature.

Israel

Mr. White asked the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to the state of Israel.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

ENERGY

Standing Charges (Small Usage Concession)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost in each quarter since its introduction of the small usage concession on the standing charge to domestic consumers of gas and electricity.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The industries' annual accounts for 1983-84 indicate that in that year standing charge rebates amounted to £42 million in the case of British Gas and £14·5 million in the case of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales.

I have asked the chairmen of British Gas and the Electricity Council to write direct to the hon. Member as to whether any further information is available.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether nuclear waste from European Economic Community nuclear power stations is being imported into the United Kingdom for processing.

Mr. Goodlad: No nuclear waste is imported into the United Kingdom for processing. BNFL has a number of contracts with overseas utilities for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Conservation

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision is made by him for direct funding of energy conservation schemes for governmental and non-governmental organisations administered by his Department.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he intends to take to save energy in hospitals and other establishments under his control in the light of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on National Health Service energy conservation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The report which was issued recently is currently under consideration. Already, as part of a public sector energy conservation drive which includes hospitals, a target for reducing energy usage by 10 per cent. at 1983-84 levels has been set for 31 March 1986. This target is to be achieved primarily by the reinforcement of "good housekeeping" measures. In addition, energy conservation measures are incorporated into all new capital projects.

Central Medical Advisory Committee

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what criteria were used in drawing up the list of organisations which will be represented on the Central Medical Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland;

(2) if he will provide places on the Central Medical Advisory Committee for representatives of junior doctors in Northern Ireland, in the same way as for the equivalent medical advisory machinery in England and Scotland.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Leeds Prison (Salmonella Poisoning)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the six prisoners who contracted salmonella poisoning in Leeds prison in October 1984 were at the time sharing a cell with another of these prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: Two of the six prisoners who contracted salmonella poisoning in Leeds prison in October 1984 were at the time sharing a cell with each other.

Ice (Rivers)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department if he intends to initiate pub campaigns alerting young children to the dangers of ice on river surfaces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Central Office of Inform has, on behalf of the Home Office, been acti promoting both radio and television publicity on dangers during the past few months; and the broadca have provided time for its transmission.

Deportation Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State fo Home Department if he will list for each year from to date, the numbers of *(a)* deportation notices serve the Greater Manchester police, *(b)* deportations enfo by the Greater Manchester police and country where *(c)* illegal immigrants removed by police, and cou where sent, *(d)* persons held in Strangeways, Risley Styal awaiting deportation or removal, with lengt times held in custody, *(e)* people prosecuted Immigration Act offences broken down into offences being charged by the Greater Manchester police, numbers of cases where court recommends deporta and numbers of cases where his Department agrees to recommendation and *(f)* people interviewed by immigration department at Ringway in connection their immigration status having once entered the Un Kingdom, specifying how many of these were connection with (i) marriage and (ii) political asylum

Mr. Waddington: I regret that information on *(a)*, *(d)*, and *(e)* is not readily available.

With regard to *(c)*, illegal entrants are removed u directions given by an immigration officer and the po are not normally involved in these arrangements. numbers of illegal entrants whose removal has b directed by the immigration service at Manchester si 1973 are:

Year	*Total removals*	*Destination*
1973	2	Pakistan
1974	3	Pakistan
1975	6	Pakistan (5), India (1)
1976	12	Pakistan (8), India (2), Bangladesh (2)
1977	15	Pakistan (12), Bangladesh (3)
1978	19	Pakistan (17), Bangladesh (1), Morocco (1)
1979	24	Pakistan (15), Bangladesh (5), Kenya (3), Canada (1)
1980	15	Pakistan (8), India (1), Bangladesh (3), Spain (1), Hong Kong (2)
1981	11	Pakistan (3), India (3), Bangladesh (2), Iran (1), Philippines (2)
1982	7	Pakistan (4), Hong Kong (1), Ghana (1), Nigeria (1)
1983	12	Pakistan (8), Bangladesh (1), Poland (2), Hong Kong (1)
1984	6	Pakistan (3), India (1), Nigeria (1), Libya (1)

With regard to *(f)*, the available information, which relates to 1974 onwards, is as follows:

Year	*Total number of persons interviewed at Manchester Airport in connection with immigration status*	*Number of persons interviewed in connection with marriage*	*Number of pers interviewe connection political asy*
1974	226	0	
1975	310	0	
1976	239	9	
1977	207	39	

Year	Total number of persons interviewed at Manchester Airport in connection with immigration status	Number of persons interviewed in connection with marriage	Number of persons interviewed in connection with political asylum
1978	156	43	1
1979	397	114	10
1980	239	127	16
1981	248	178	21
1982	320	180	48
1983	432	226	75
1984	374	212	92

Civil Defence

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what criteria grant applications for funds to build or improve emergency centres under the Civil Defence Regulations 1983 are assessed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Civil defence grant is approved on the cost of adapting premises to meet the minimum standards set by the Home Office. In exceptional circumstances additional payments of grant are paid to local authorities which are faced with particular difficulties.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has funds available to local authorities for the maintenance of emergency centres.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The costs of maintenance of emergency centres is a matter for local authorities, except that grant aid is available for maintaining accommodation for communications as set out in Home Office circular No. ES 8/1973. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquiries from *(a)* members of the public and *(b)* voluntary organisations have been received by his Department about volunteering to take part in civil defence preparations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Inquiries from members of the public are referred to the appropriate county emergency planning officer; no central record is kept of inquiries from voluntary organisations.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised casualty estimates after a nuclear attack will be published.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of people who would be killed in a nuclear attack cannot be predicted; and we therefore have no proposals to publish casualty estimates.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has plans to produce a film on planning for peacetime emergencies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Construction Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from all chief constables on the extent of the practice of construction plant and machinery being stolen and dismantled on an organised basis for export abroad as spares and then reassembled for sale.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The investigation of criminal offences reported to them is a matter for individual chief officers of police. My right hon. and learned Friend has noted the industry's concern in its letter to him of 27 February and is considering what advice and assistance might best be given to the industry.

National Reporting Centre

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he estimates to be the running costs of the National Reporting Centre in 1984; and who is responsible for the payment of its costs.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 January 1985, c. *15-16*]: The additional cost of operating the National Reporting Centre during 1984 is estimated at about £130,000. The bulk of these costs were met from the Metropolitan police fund, except for the travelling and other expenses of police officers from other forces who attended the centre from time to time.

Sex Offenders (Treatment)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people convicted of sex offences are currently on probation conditional upon their receiving some form of medical or psychological therapy.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1985, c. *351-52*]: The latest available information is for 30 June 1983, when it is estimated about 250 people convicted of indictable sexual offences were being supervised on probation orders including a requirement for psychiatric treatment.

DEFENCE

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost and the number of submarines and cruise missiles which would be necessary to equal the capacity of the Trident missile system by way of submarine-launched cruise missiles; whether such a system is of equal deterrence value; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: I refer my hon. Friend to the very full statement on this subject by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 29 November 1984, at columns 1125-28. The Government considered cruise missile options before decisions on Trident were taken and concluded that they were far less cost effective. This conclusion remains unchanged. Many more cruise missiles and warheads would be needed to provide a deterrent equivalent to that of a ballistic missile force, and at least twice the number of submarines would be necessary. Such a force would be considerably more expensive to procure and run than our planned Trident II force and would have a much inferior capability against any future developments in Soviet defensive systems.

Homosexuality

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces in each of the last four years have been disciplined on the ground

of male or female homosexuality; under what military regulations they have been charged and disciplined; of the total number disciplined in each year, how many have been *(a)* discharged administratively, *(b)* dishonourably discharged, *(c)* court-martialled and *(d)* given military prison sentences; and, in these cases, what has been the minimum, maximum and average length of sentences in each year.

Mr. Lee: No member of the services is disciplined purely on the ground of being a homosexual. If an individual has committed no offence, he will usually be administratively discharged, which is not a d procedure. However, homosexual practice is under each Service Discipline Act, and ma administrative discharge or action under the A may result in dismissal or imprisonment.

Little of the information required is kept by Navy in a form that can be provided within the time scale or without disproportionate effort. information which is available in the case of Navy, and statistics for the Army and Royal Air as follows:

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	
Royal Navy				
Administrative discharges	†2	5	6	
Courts Martial	2	3	1	
Dismissal/Dismassal with disgrace*	—	—	—	
Detention Sentences	—	—	—	
Prison Sentences	—	—	—	
Min-Max Sentences	—	—	—	
Average Sentences	—	—	—	
Army				
Administrative Discharges	68	75	51	
Courts Martial	41	30	12	
Dismissal/Dismissal with disgrace*	29	20	12	
Detention Sentences	26	16	9	
Prison Sentences	1	5	1	
Min-Max Sentences	1 year	1year-3years	3 years	9 mo
Average Sentences	1 year	2 years	3 years	
Royal Air Force				
Administrative Discharges	62	33	23	
Courts Martial	3	7	1	
Dismissal/Dismissal with disgrace*	1	5	1	
Detention Sentences	1	5	1	
Prison Sentences	0	0	0	
Min-Max Sentences	7 months	56 days-126 days	112 days	
Average Sentences	7 months	92 days	112 days	

Notes: 1. Figures refer to the number of cases brought, not to the number of convictions.
2. These actions are brought under the Naval Discipline Act 1957 and Queen's Regulations (Royal Navy); the Army Act 195 Regulations (Army) and prerogative powers of the Army Board; the Air Force Act 1955 and Queen's Regulations (Royal Air Fo

* The term "dishonourable discharge" does not exist in the British armed services, and it is assumed that dismissal or dismissal with disgrace to.

† Data on RN officers administratively discharged are available only from January 1982.

Falklands Campaign (Official Secrets Act)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all inquiries which took place arising from the Falklands conflict, including those conducted at Northwood, concerning alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Heseltine: There have been six inquiries involving my Department about the possible deliberate and unauthorised disclosure of official information, arising from the Falklands campaign. Two of these cases concerned Lance Corporal Aldridge and Mr. Ponting: for the reasons given today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in answer to a related question from the hon. Gentleman, it would be wrong for me to make public information about the others.

Trident

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates have been made to cover the additional requirements of command, control, communica intelligence for the Trident system; and if this included in the total cost estimate of Trident.

Mr. Butler: The cost information sought by Member is classified. The Trident estimate inc full cost of equipment fitted in the submarine a associated facilities dedicated to the Trident pro

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pupils (Costs and Attainments)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for E and Science if he will list *(a)* the average nu school leavers with five or more O-levels, *(b)* the numbers of school-leavers with two or more A-l *(c)* the average cost of education per school pup the Inner London education authority, (ii) met districts, (iii) shire counties and (iv) England.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as

School leavers from maintained schools in academic year 1982-83 with:	ILEA	Metropolitan† districts	Shire Counties	England
5 or more higher* grades at O level or CSE	4,150	37,470	104,110	160,280
2 or more A level passes	1,960	18,060	50,600	78,080
Unit cost expenditure per maintained school pupil in 1982-83 financial year	£1,381	£826	£795	£838

* O level grades A-C, CSE Grade 1.
† As defined, these exclude Outer London boroughs.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning educational aspects of workplace nursery provision.

Mr. Dunn: None.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in descending order the cost of educating the average pupil in each local education authority.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March]: The average net cost per pupil in primary and secondary schools for each local education authority is given in the following table.

New Cost per pupil (£ cash)—England—1982-83 Combined primary and secondary schools*

Local Education Authority	Net cost per pupil £
ILEA	1,281
Haringey	1,141
Brent	1,085
Newham	1,046
Waltham Forest	1,046
Ealing	1,024
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,001
Hounslow	960
Barnet	956
Manchester	952
Liverpool	934
Hillingdon	925
Sheffield	923
Gateshead	820
Cleveland	818
Leicestershire	817
Northumberland	813
Calderdale	811
Bradford	808
Durham	807
Suffolk	805
Buckinghamshire	803
Berkshire	801
Shropshire	799
Sunderland	798
Dorset	798
Harrow	918
Havering	904
Croydon	901
Barking	900
Walsall	899
South Tyneside	897
Knowsley	895
Wolverhampton	894
Redbridge	893
Bromley	891
Northtyneside	889
Merton	888
Rochdale	874
Richmond-upon-Thames	867
Humberside	859
Bedfordshire	858
Nottinghamshire	856
Oxfordshire	848
Coventry	848
Bexley	846
Sandwell	844
Kingston-upon-Thames	837
Isle of Wight	837
Doncaster	836
Barnsley	832
Cumbria	832
North Yorkshire	831
Enfield	830
Staffordshire	829
Hertfordshire	828
Avon	826
Bury	826
Wigan	825
Salford	824
Sutton	823
Sefton	792
East Sussex	789
Surrey	789
Tameside	788
Cheshire	788
Norfolk	787
Birmingham	786
Gloucestershire	784
Trafford	782
St. Helens	781
Derbyshire	780
Northamptonshire	780
Leeds	779
Essex	773
Kirklees	772
Lincolnshire	772
Wakefield	771
Solihull	768
Lancashire	768
Rotherham	767
Wirral	767
Cornwall	766
Devon	766
Kent	766
Hereford & Worcester	764
Wiltshire	762
Oldham	761
Cambridgeshire	761
Hampshire	760
Stockport	758
Bolton	755
Warwickshire	755
West Sussex	747
Somerset	738
Dudley	735

* The figures have been derived from "Education Statistics 1982-83 Actuals" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

ENVIRONMENT

Superstore Development (Eltham)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the proposed superstore development at Eltham High Street, SE9, following the public inquiry held from 28 January to 14 March 1984.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce his decision very soon.

House Building

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public sector housing starts were under way in *(a)* Birmingham, *(b)* Coventry, *(c)* Wolverhampton, *(d)* Dudley, *(e)* Sandwell and *(f)* Walsall in each year since 1977 to the latest available date.

Sir George Young: The reported numbers of dwellings under construction for the authorities and for other public sector bodies appear in "Local Housing Statistics", available in the Library, in the following issues which, from 1979, include revisions and late return.

End of December	*Number*
1977	45
1978	49
1979	59
1980	*57
1981	65
1982	66
1983	70
1984†	72

* Except Sandwell in 59 and Birmingham in 60.
† End of September.

The local authority figures for Birmingham include overspill building.

Rates

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the average sums paid in rates by domestic ratepayers in England, gross and net of rate rebates, in each year since 1977-78.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in which years since 1955 there has been a rating revaluation in England.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Revaluations in England took effect in 1956, 1963 and 1973.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make available the Cambridge report commissioned by his Department on the effects of business rates on the location of employment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report itself is being published by the authors and I have today arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

I have also today written to interested bodies giving them copies of the report and asking for relevant information they may hold on where the burden of business rates falls, before considering whether a further study might usefully be commissioned.

Construction Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Sec for the Environment what representations h from the construction industry about th construction plant and machinery bein dismantled on an organised basis for ex spares and then reassembled for sale; and i a statement.

Mr. Gow: None, but I share the indus and I welcome the efforts that are being ma problem. The Building Employers Confede an advisory service on security, and a num industry organisations have formed the thef action committee. Ultimate responsibility fo theft rests with the police authorities, and I t the joint action committee has written to my learned Friend the Home Secretary about t

Conduct of Local Authority Business

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of Environment whether he is now able to ma on the membership of the inquiry into the co authority business the establishment announced on 6 February.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I am glad to info that my right hon. Friends the Secretarie Scotland and for Wales and I propose t following members of the committee of inq chairmanship of Mr. David Widdicombe Q

Sir Lawrence Boyle, JP, formerly Chie Strathclyde Regional Council.

Mr. Peter Newsam, Chairman of the Commi Equality.

Mr. George Russel, Managing Director o Aluminium.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Servants (Official Secrets

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Attorney many cases of criminal proceedings have b against civil servants in connection with all of the Official Secrets Act since 1965; if h breakdown of the Government Department they emanated; and what proportion o subsequently acquitted.

The Attorney-General: Since 1965 pr civil servants for alleged offences contrary Secrets Act have been authorised in 17 ca these cases proceedings were later withdra defendants were convicted and two were a other case is still pending. The employing d the civil servants were as follows:

Department
Cabinet Office
Home Office
Ministry of Aviation
Official Receiver
Ministry of Defence
Department of Health & Social Security
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Central Office of Information

Department	Number
Security Service	1
GCHQ	1
GPO	1

SCOTLAND

"Broadleaves in Britain"

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the new management guidelines for broadleaved woodland which will result from the "Broadleaves in Britain" review will apply equally to woodlands in private ownership and the Forestry Commission's own woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes.

Conservation

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission's conservationists are given the discretion to refuse grant aid for forestry planting on sites of special scientific interest on the grounds that such planting would be harmful to the conservation interest of the site.

Mr. John MacKay: I take it that my hon. Friend is referring to Forestry Commission's conservators.

The views of the Nature Conservancy Council are sought by the Forestry Commission on every application for grant aid for planting on sites of special scientific interest. When the Nature Conservancy Council objects in whole or in part to a proposal, and agreement cannot be reached between the council and the applicant, a decision on grant aid is taken not by the conservator but by the Forestry Commissioners.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what scientific nature conservation expertise the Forestry Commission has to enable it to make decisions on conservancy at forest district level over management of ancient semi-natural woodland which reconcile the nature conservation and forestry interests of such woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has many professional and technical officers at conservancy and forest district levels who have knowledge and understanding of nature conservation matters. They are backed up as necessary by specialist scientific advice both from the commission's own research and development division and from the Nature Conservancy Council. The commission is currently discussing with the Nature Conservancy Council the drawing up of guidelines for the management of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands.

Oxygen Supplies

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients in Scotland are supplied with oxygen by community pharmacists or through their own general practitioner; what is the cost of the service; how many of these patients would be classified as requiring major therapy and how many would be classified as requiring occasional use therapy; and how many patients in each of these categories use cylinder oxygen and how many use concentrators.

Mr. John MacKay: At the end of October 1984, patients in Scotland were being supplied with oxyg community pharmacists or through their own g practitioner. About 50 patients could be classifi requiring major therapy and the remainder as req occasional use therapy. All patients were suppli means of cylinder oxygen. The total cost of the serv October 1984 was £75,661.

Rates

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Sc in which years since 1955 there has been a revaluation in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: Valuations were reviewed continu until the passing of the Valuation and Rating (Sco Act 1956. Since then there have been revaluatio Scotland in the years 1961, 1966, 1971, 1978 and

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Sc if he will report on the outcome of his meeting in Sc on Wednesday 27 February with representative pharmacists to discuss further the implications o limited list of drugs available under the National H Service; what was the nature of the representatio received; whether he proposes to take any action as a of the meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I met representatives o Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, Sc Department and the Pharmaceutical General Co (Scotland) on 27 February for discussions on va matters associated with the Government's measur restrict the range of drugs available under the NH treatment of certain conditions. The main areas co were the arrangements for ensuring that patients in re areas of Scotland had access to sources of supply drugs, the supply position of manufacturers wholesalers on drugs which will continue to be avai on NHS prescriptions and the implications of the measures for community pharmacists' stockholdin drugs, remuneration procedures and terms of service. comments received from the profession are being t into account as appropriate in the detailed arrangem

NHS (Management)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Sco what action he is taking to implement his proposal developing the general management function in National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I received some 90 responses individuals and organisations to the proposals I issue consultation in June last year. These indicate considerable measure of support for my intentio introduce the general management function into Scottish Health Service.

My Department is today issuing guidance to h boards requiring them to make arrangements to app general managers at board level. In mainland boards general manager posts will be new full-time p recruitment will be by open advertisement. Islands bo will select a general manager from their existing officers and general management duties will be perfor

in addition to that officer's existing functions. Mainland and Island boards are expected to have general managers appointed by the end of 1985.

I will be considering further how to develop the general management function at unit level in the light of a study of unit management which my Department will commission.

To enable my Department to provide the necessary guidance on strategic tasks and targets and to monitor the National Health Service's performance, I have created a new under-secretary post with responsibility for NHS management, finance and operational planning. I intend to establish a Health Service Policy Board, under the chairmanship of the Minister with responsibility for health and social work, to advise on policy decisions required for the Health Service in Scotland, the efficient management of the service, and the performance of the service in implementing agreed policy. The membership will include the chairman of the Scottish Health Boards Chairmen's Group and the chairman of the Scottish Health Service Planning Council, together with my Department's senior administrative and professional staff and the Chief Scientist. It will be supplemented as appropriate by the under-secretary responsible for the social work services group.

I have arranged for copies of the circular to be placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Elena Gurevich (USSR)

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about Elena Gurevich and her family who wish to emigrate to Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We have made clear our strong feelings about the refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow Jewish and other Soviet citizens, who wish to do so, to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Both my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend raised this question most recently with Mr. Gorbachev, whose answer, regrettably, gave no cause to hope for an early change in Soviet policy. We shall continue to press for full implementation by the Soviet Union of its commitments in the human rights field and will keep the case of Elena Gurevich and many others like it fully in mind.

Falklands Campaign (Official Secrets Act)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all inquiries which took place at Government communications headquarters, arising from the Falklands conflict concerning alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Rifkind: There has been one alleged case at GCHQ, which has required some investigating, but it would not be right to give any further information, and I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Gas Cookers

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to introduce mandatory certification for gas cookers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I am not satisfied that there is a need to require certification of gas cookers using powers under the Consumer Safety Act 1978. I do intend, however, to introduce regulations under that Act to establish new maximum permissible temperatures for the fronts and sides of domestic gas and electric cookers below hob level. These regulations would, of course, apply equally to cookers of British and foreign manufacture. It is highly desirable that these regulations should be based on agreement reached within the framework of the British Standards Institution. As I stated in a press notice of 26 November 1984, six months seems a reasonable period for agreement to be reached on new temperatures lower than those in the current British Standard. I hope therefore to have regulations ready in draft before the end of May. An approach has already been made to the EC Commission seeking its advice and help on the best method of achieving our objective, which is the protection of consumers from domestic cookers which become too hot to touch on the outside, within the framework of our obligations as members of the EC.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department has taken on the complaint of interference by citizens band radio in Maryer Road, SE7, brought to his attention by the hon. Member for Woolwich on 14 January; and when he expects to be able to resolve the matter.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Company Liquidations

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of company liquidations which have occurred in the west midlands in 1982 and 1983; what is the latest available figure for 1984; and what information he has as to the total number of employees in the companies involved.

Mr. Fletcher: I regret that figures of company liquidations are not analysed by area. No information is available on the number of employees involved.

Company Bankruptcies

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total number of company bankruptcies which have occurred in the west midlands since 1981.

Mr. Fletcher: The total number of bankruptcies administered in the years 1982 to 1984 inclusive by county courts in the whole of West Midlands county was 1,105 *(a)*. The figure relates to all individuals and partnerships. For England and Wales as a whole, unincorporated

businesses account for between 75 and 80 per cent. of the total. Official figures of company liquidations are not available by area.

(a) Provisional: will be overstated because the number of consolidations and recissions to be deducted for 1984 is not yet known. In 1983 there were 26.

Manufactures (Exports)

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps he is taking to encourage the export of United Kingdom manufactured products;

(2) what support his Department provides to small companies which want to establish export markets;

(3) what has been the proportion of exports by United Kingdom manufacturing companies in percentage terms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Fletcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Market Entry Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the operation of the market entry guarantee scheme.

Mr. Fletcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Overseas Projects Fund

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small companies have received support from the overseas projects fund in each year since 1979.

Mr. Fletcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Extra-statutory Concession (VAT)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the last financial year the extra-statutory concession was exercised on value added tax paid as a result of misdirection by a Customs and Excise officer.

Mr. Hayhoe: The concession was exercised on 153 occasions in the financial year 1983-84.

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which fiscal year the extra-statutory concession was introduced on value added tax paid as a result of misdirection by a Customs and Excise officer.

Mr. Hayhoe: The concession was introduced in the financial year 1978-79.

VAT Registration

Mr. Conway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present rate of value added tax registration in the Shrewsbury and Atcham area compared with the same period in 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that detailed records are not maintained in this form. Statistics of new VAT registrations are prepared quarterly on a geographical basis by reference to the local VAT office at which the registrations are made. Available information for the Shrewsbury VAT office, which covers a somewhat larger area than my hon. Friend's constituency, is as follows:

Total number of registrations as at 3 January 1984 — 13,555.

Total number of registrations as at 3 January 1985 — 13,618.

New registrations quarter ending 3 January 1984—282.

New registrations quarter ending 3 January 1985—309.

Charities (VAT)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received proposing the extension of the limited relief from value added tax given to registered charities.

Mr. Hayhoe: During the last three months my Treasury colleagues and I have received a total of 56 representations from individuals and organisations regarding extension of VAT relief for charities. I met a deputation from the Charities VAT Reform Group on 4 December.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of value added tax paid by charitable organisations on the income received by them in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not available. Charities which engage in business activities must register for VAT and charge VAT on their supplies in the same way as other enterprises. Non-business income is not liable to VAT.

Capital Assets (Financial Management)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is done under the financial management initiative to ensure that line managers are fully informed of all the capital assets under their management; and what is the system of reporting on the condition of these assets.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Government Borrowing and Expenditure

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total Government borrowing requirement and the total of central Government's spending for each year since 1979; what proportion this represented of gross domestic product; and what information he has as to how these figures compare with those for the United States of America, Japan, Germany and Australia, respectively.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Flows

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the inward and outward capital flows for the United Kingdom in the years 1979 to 1984; and what information he has as to how these compare with the figures for the United States of America, Japan, Germany and Australia, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Money Supply

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the rates of growth in the United Kingdom money supply, as measured by M0, M1, M3 and £M3, in the years 1979 to 1984; and what information he has as to the equivalent or nearest equivalent figures for the United States of America, Japan, Germany and Australia, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning tax incentives to provide workplace nurseries.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

PAYE Taxpayers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, by Inland Revenue region *(a)* the number of pay as you earn taxpayers, *(b)* the number of pay as you earn taxpayers, on the latest quarterly figures, not yet assessed or otherwise cleared for the last tax year and *(c)* figures comparable to *(b)* for the position of this assessing work in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Industrial Society

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any information was provided by the Inland Revenue to the Industrial Society during 1984 concerning the incomes of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March 1985]: No information of this kind has been provided to the Industrial Society.

Allowances

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider retaining the system of first-year allowances on plant and machinery for unincorporated businesses at 75 per cent. and the 10 per cent. allowance on agricultural buildings.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March 1985]: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for June 1984 the number of *(a)* whole-time and *(b)* part-time farmers, partners and directors of agricultural holdings of 100 hectares and over, the number of such holdings and the number of spouses in each case engaged in farm work, distinguishing the number who were also partners and directors and those who were not.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of farmers, partners and directors of agricultural holdings of 100 hectares and over total area recorded in the June 1984 agricultural census for England and Wales was as follows:

	Farmers, Partners and Directors*	*Related Holdings**
Whole Time	37,600	24,500
Part Time	7,400	6,100
Totals	45,000	26,600

*ON 4,000 of the holdings there were both whole-time and part-time farmers, partners or directors.

The best available data on spouses on these holdings is as follows:

Spouses of:	*Number*
—whole-time principal farmers	7,400
—part-time principal farmers	400
—other farmers, partners and directors	1,700
All spouses	9,500

These figures relate only to spouses doing farm work. The census does not record the number of spouses who were also partners and directors: neither does it distinguish between spouses of whole-time and of part-time farmers, partners and directors, except as shown in the table.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing agricultural holdings by size of holding on the same basis as in table 9.7 of the 1979 edition of the annual abstract for the latest available date.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is available from "Agricultural Statistics United Kingdom", published annually by HMSO and available from the Library of the House.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his coverage of farm incomes in Cmnd. 9423 covers public limited companies wholly or predominantly engaged in agriculture; and if he will publish such information as he has concerning the return on capital in such companies on an historic cost and on a current cost basis before 1978 and in 1983.

Mr. MacGregor: The calculation of output, input and net incomes of the agricultural sector covers such companies, but it is not possible to identify separately their contribution to the totals.

Salmon Stocks

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now publish all those statistics relating to his inquiry into the effect on salmon stocks of the north east drift net fishery which are not commercially confidential.

Mr. MacGregor: Apart from information which is commercially confidential, the statistics used in this inquiry have already been published in one form or another.

Cereals

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will break down the cereal figures in table 4 of the "Annual Review of Agriculture", Cmnd. 9423, to show wheat and barley separately; and if he will include figures for holdings of more than 75 hectares and 150 hectares, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is available for 1983 from table 7 of "Agricultural Statistics United Kingdom 1983", published by HMSO and available in the Library of the House. Figures for 1984 are not available.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government have considered the economics of paying hill farmers not to farm.

Mr. Jopling: No. I regard the continuation of farming in the hills and uplands as essential for conservation and important to the rural economy as a whole.

Poultrymeat

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to give protection to British poultrymeat processors from unfair overseas competition.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985]: Various local authorities have responsibilities in relation to the water content of imported frozen chicken and other aspects of quality and hygiene under domestic and EC legislation. My Department keeps closely in touch with the organisations which represent the various enforcement agencies about the exercise of these responsibilities.

Any evidence of illegal national aids which might assist poultrymeat producers and processors in other member states to the detriment of the United Kingdom industry would immediately be notified to the European Commission; and we are continuing to press for the elimination of the distortion in competition created by the varying standards of enforcement of the EC poultrymeat hygiene legislation in the different member states.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the dates of introduction of all the drugs on his amended limited list;

(2) how many and which products on his amended limited list will fall into the category of only having a licence of right.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information about the dates of introduction of medicines on the selected list could be extracted from our records only at disproportionate cost. However, we do know that the great majority were already on the market when the Medicines Act became operational in 1971.

The table lists the products mentioned in the selected list which still have licences of right. The total is 394 licences. These represent just over half of the licensed products on the selected list. As part of our review programme these products will be assessed under the Medicines Act over the next few years.

*List of medicinal products on the selected list which have licences of right under the Medicines Act**
Number of Products with Licences of Right

Product Name	*Number*
Antacids	
ALU-CAP	1
Aluminium Hydroxide Tablets BP	9
Aluminium Hydroxide Mixture BP	5
Magnesium Hydroxide Mixture BP	6
Magnesium Trisilicate BP	1
Magnesium Trisilicate Tablets, Compound BP	13
Magnesium Trisilicate Mixture BP	6
Calcium Carbonate Mixture, Compound, Paediatric BPC	1
Chalk Mixture, Paediatric BP	3
Sodium Bicarbonate Mixture, Paediatric BPC	1
Sodium Bicarbonate Tablets, Compound BP	8
Laxatives	
Bulk Laxatives:	
CELEVAC TABLETS	1
CELLUCON TABLETS	1
ISOGEL	1
METAMUCIL	2
NORMACOL SPECIAL	1
VI-SIBLIN	1
Stimulant Laxatives:	
Bisacodyl Tablets BP 5mg	2
DORBANEX CAPSULES, LIQUID AND LIQUID FORTE	3
SENOKOT GRANULES	1
SENOKOT SYRUP	1
Senna Tablets BP	1
Faecal Softeners:	
DIOCTYL SYRUP	1
DIOCTYL TABLETS	1
Osmotic Laxatives:	
Magnesium Sulphate BP	3
Magnesium Sulphate Mixture BP	2
Suppositories:	
Bisacodyl Suppositories BP (all strengths)	1
Glycerol Suppositories BP (all sizes)	8
X-PREP LIQUID	1
Analgesics	
For Mild to Moderate Pain	
Aspirin Tablets BP (all strengths)	3
Aspirin Tablets, Dispersible BP	1
Codeine Phosphate Syrup BP	3
Codeine Phosphate Tablets BP (all strengths)	3
Paracetamol Elixir, Paediatric BP	2
Paracetamol Tablets BP (all strengths)	3
Pentazocine Lactate Injection BP	1
Aloxiprin Tablets BP	1
CAPRIN	1
MIDRID	1
MIGRALEVE (Pink and Yellow)	1
Cough and Cold Remedies	
Cough Suppressants:	
Codeine Linctus BP	2
Pholcodine Linctus BP	13
Pholcodine Linctus, Strong BP	9

Product Name	Number
PHOLCOMED DIABETIC LINCTUS	1
Expectorants, Demulcents and Compound Preparations:	
Ammonium Chloride Mixture BP	2
Simple Linctus BP	13
Simple Linctus, Paediatric BP	6
Systemic Nasal Decongestants	
SUDAFED ELIXIR	1
SUDAFED TABLETS	1
Inhalations:	
Benzoin Tincture, Compound BP	12
Menthol and Eucalyptus Inhalation BP	9
Topical Nasal Decongestants:	
Ephedrine Nasal Drops BPC 0·5% w/v	8
Ephedrine Nasal Drops BNF 1% w/v	1
Xylometazoline Hydrochloride nasal drops BP 0·05% w/v	1
Xylometazoline Hydrochloride nasal drops BP 0·1% w/v	1
Inhalation Mucolytics	
AIRBRON	1
ALEVAIRE	1
Bitters and Tonics	
Gentian Mixture, Acid BPC	1
Gentian Mixture, Alkaline BP	3
Vitamins	
Vitamin A Preparations:	
Halibut Liver Oil Capsules BP	16
RO-A-VIT TABLETS	1
Vitamins A and D Capsules BPC	6
Vitamin B Preparations:	
Nicotinamide Tablets BP (all strengths)	13
Pyridoxine Hydrochloride Tablets BP 10mg, 20mg, 50mg	15
Thiamine Hydrochloride Injection BP (all strengths)	1
Thiamine Hydrochloride Tablets BP (all strengths)	21
Vitamin B Tablets, Compound BPC	2
Vitamin B Tablets, Compound, Strong BPC	1
Vitamin C Preparations:	
Ascorbic Acid Injection BPC	1
Ascorbic Acid Tablets BP 25mg, 50mg, 100mg, 200mg, 500mg	62
Vitamin D Preparations:	
AT 10	1
Calciferol Injection BP	1
Calciferol Solution BP	1
Calciferol Tablets, High Strength BP	6
Calciferol Tablets, Strong BP 1973	4
Vitamin E Preparations:	
EPHYNAL TABLETS (all strengths)	4
VITA-E GELS, VITA-E GELUCAPS, VITA-E SUCCINATE TABLETS	6
Vitamin K Preparations:	
SYNKAVIT INJECTION (all strengths)	2
SYNKAVIT TABLETS	1
Oral Multivitamin Preparations:	
ABIDEC DROPS	1
DALIVIT DROPS	1
Vitamins Capsules BPC	8
PARENTROVITE	1
PABRINEX	1
Folic Acid Tablets BP	20
Folic Acid with iron	1
Total	3

* Proprietary preparations are shown in block capitals.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services what specific publicity he proposes to institute inform the public of the list of medicines which will cea to be prescribable on the National Health Service after April.

Mr. Kenneth Clark: We have already made our ne proposals widely available through the press. A leaflet being prepared for issue to patients through gener practitioners and pharmacists.

Heating Allowance

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State f Social Services how many applicants there have been Gwent for heating allowance since November 1984; ho many of the applicants have been rejected; and how mar have received assistance.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that statistical information is n collected on the number of decisions to give or refus heating additions under regulation 12 and schedule 4 of th Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations.

About 200 lump sum payments have been made Gwent so far this year for extra fuel used by claimants the recent exceptionally severe weather. The averag amount paid is £6·62. It is too early to say what the tot number of payments made or the average amount paid th year will be. Information on the number of unsuccessfu claims made is not available and could be obtained onl at disproportionate cost.

NHS (Energy Conservation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State f Social Services what energy conservation schemes h intends to initiate in respect of National Health Servic hospitals and administrative buildings.

Mr. John Patten: It is for health authoritie themselves to initiate energy conservation measures a part of local revenue cost improvement programmes. Th Department will continue to encourage the adoption o innovatory measures and provide resources for monitorin demonstration schemes that will benefit the rest of th health service. Two hospitals, in Windsor and Dover, wi be used as demonstration sites for the effectiveness of ne measures, for energy survey and auditing method computer aids, small building management systems an involvement of all hospital staff in the drive to reduc energy costs in the existing National Health Service estat

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Soci Services what is the current ratio of pensioners in Scotlan to people of working age; and what assumptions he make about the ratio in *(a)* 1994, *(b)* 2004 and *(c)* 2024.

Mr. Whitney: The information as requested is n available. Based on the 1981 population projections, it estimated that the numbers of adults of working age an persons of pension age in Great Britain will be as follow

Year	Adults of working age (thousands)	Persons of pension age (thousands)	Ratio of A to B
1984-85	33,372	9,977	3·3:1
1995-96	33,647	10,174	3·3:1
2005-06	34,113	10,139	3·4:1
2025-26	33,636	12,344	2·7:1

Source: "Population, Pension Costs and Pensioners' Incomes" HMSO 1984 Table 1

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the reply to the hon. Member for Westminster, North on 13 April 1984, *Official Report*, column *406*, concerning measures introduced or improved since 1979 to increase the well-being of pensioners.

Mr. Whitney: Since April 1984 the Government have continued to promote the well-being of pensioners. In November 1984 we uprated the retirement pension by 5·1 per cent. This means that between November 1978 and November 1984 the rate of the retirement pension went up by 83·6 per cent., whereas the rise in the retail prices index during this period was only 77·2 per cent. This more than honours our pledge to maintain the real value of retirement pensions.

We have continued to keep down the rate of inflation, thus protecting the value of savings, benefits and non-index linked occupational pensions.

We are now spending more than ever on help with heating costs—an estimated £400 million in 1984-85. Some 1·5 million pensioner householders are amongst those who benefit from these heating additions, which have increased by some 20 per cent. in real terms between November 1978 and November 1984. In November 1984 we extended heating additions to include all supplementary pensioner householders aged 65 or over and gave higher rate heating additions worth £5·20 a week to all those aged 85 and over. It is now estimated that over 90 per cent. of supplementary pensioner householders get heating additions.

At present married women who qualify for the over 80s non-contributory retirement pension are paid at a lower rate than men and single women. The Social Security Bill provides for the abolition of this lower rate and to pay everyone equally from November 1985.

From November 1984 periods after people reach age 80 have counted towards the 10-year residence test for the over 80s non-contributory retirement pension. Before that date people entering, or returning, to the United Kingdom after the age of 70 were usually unable to qualify, no matter how long they lived in this country thereafter.

The inquiry into provision for retirement has now finished its work and Ministers expect to publish their proposals in the next few months.

Family Planning

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve the provision of specialised family planning services throughout the United Kingdom, with particular emphasis on special sessions for young people.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is for individual health authorities to decide the priority they attach to these services, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of district health authorities currently provide *(a)* sterilisation services for women, *(b)* vasectomy services and *(c)* sub-fertility services; what action he plans to increase those percentages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have comprehensive information. It is for individual health authorities to determine the level of provision of these services, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Single Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in which parts of Great Britain supplementary benefit claimants may qualify for single payments on the grounds of exceptionally severe weather under the formula laid down by the Chief Adjudication Officer in respect of quarterly fuel bills for periods ended in February.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 14 January at column *64* and on 18 February at columns *389-93* and to the hon. Member for Walsall, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 21 January at columns *349-53*.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many wrongful refusals of single payments for furniture were found in the course of his inspectorate's inquiry on this subject; and whether those payments have now been made.

Mr. Whitney: The inspectors were of the opinion that in 18 out of the 200 cases examined there was a possibility that payment might have been wrongfully refused; but 16 of these were subsequently revised after appeal by claimants. Decisions on claims for single payments for furniture are made initially by independent adjudication officers in local offices, subject to the right of appeal to social security appeal tribunals and, on a point of law, to the Social Security Commissioners, As officers of the Social Security Policy Inspectorate are not adjudication officers, their opinion on the merits of individual cases cannot be decisive and does not provide grounds for reopening cases in which the claimant himself is satisfied with the decision.

NHS (GP List)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the outcome of the application to the National Health Service medical tribunal by the City and East London family practitioners' committee in May 1983 for the removal of a general practitioner from the National Health Service list; if he is satisfied with the operation of the tribunal timetable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the particular case to which the hon. Member refers, the tribunal hearing was reconvened on 20 February 1985. The general practitioner concerned undertook to resign from the medical list of the City and East London family practitioner committee and not to apply for inclusion in the list of any other family practitioner committee. On the basis of this undertaking, the City and East London FPC requested the tribunal's leave to withdraw its representations against the general practitioner and this was granted. The general practitioner

has submitted his resignation to the FPC and this will be considered in due course by the Secretary of State for Social Services.

We are satisfied with the operation of the tribunal timetable.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the procedure adopted by his Department on receipt of an application from a general practitioner for inclusion on the National Health Service list, who has previously resigned from that list, and who has been the subject of an undetermined case at a National Health Service medical tribunal by virtue of that resignation prior to the relevant hearing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Where a doctor has given an undertaking to the National Health Service tribunal to resign from the medical list of a family practitioner committee and not to seek inclusion in the medical list of any other committee, and the Secretary of State has consented to the doctor's resignation, the doctor will be expected to provide the Secretary of State with evidence of his fitness to return to general practice in order to secure release from his undertaking.

Drug Addiction

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints he has received from drugs specialists about his proposed television advertising campaign to dissuade youngsters from drug addiction and misuse.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Mr. Heatherington (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth can expect to receive a definitive answer to his letter dated 1 October 1984 about Mr. Heatherington of Long Lawford, near Rugby.

Mr. Newton: I regret the delay, and wrote to my hon. Friend yesterday.

Oxygen Supplies

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients in England are supplied with oxygen by community pharmacists or through their own general practitioner; how many of these patients would be classified as requiring major therapy and how many would be classified as requiring only occasional use therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: "Major therapy" and "occasional use therapy" are not terms which are readily definable at the moment. However, a survey of prescribing in England during the first half of 1984 showed that 31,715 patients received oxygen, of whom 28,096 or about 89 per cent. used less than five cylinders a month—an average consumption of less than two hour a day. Of the remainder, only 865 or about 2·5 per cent., required more than 25 cylinders a month or an average of 10 hours or more a day. Whilst these figures give an indication of the current usage pattern of domiciliary oxygen, we do not have sufficient information about each patient's prescribed treatment to enable us to classify the type of therapy prescribed in each case.

Social Services (Review)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for So Services when he plans to publish the consulta document on the review of social services.

Mr. John Patten: We hope to publish the consulta document in the summer.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for So Services if he will consult the local authority organisat to ascertain their views on the options to be canvasse his forthcoming consultation document, the review social services.

Mr. John Patten: No. The consultation process in itself enable local authority organisations to sug other approaches and to canvass views, if they wish.

Lynders Wood Court, Braintree

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for So Services how many residents at Lynders Wood Co London Road, Black Notley, Braintree, Essex, supplementary pensioners; and how many of them *(a)* being paid board and lodging allowance *(b)* allowances for residential care.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a re as soon as possible.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of S for Social Services what recent representations he received concerning workplace nursery provision.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Pregnancies (Statistics)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of S for Social Services if he will give a breakdown for e of the years since 1969 of the total numbers of concepti and the rate of such conceptions per 1,000 women in e age group which led to live or still maternities which w *(a)* legitimate, *(b)* illegitimate or *(c)* legitimate follow marriage after conception, and for conceptions termina by abortion, of women aged (i) under 16 years and under 20 years at the time of such conceptions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The table gives the estima figures for women usually resident in England and Wa

Conceptions to women aged under 16 and under 20: 1969-1982 England and Wales

Under 16 at conception

Year of conception	*All legitimate maternities**	*Legitimate maternities conceived outside marriage*	*Illegitimate maternities*	*Concepti leading abortio under 19 Act*
		Numbers ('000s)		
1969	1·5	1·5	3·3	1·7
1970	1·7	1·6	3·6	2·5
1971	1·7	1·6	3·9	3·2
1972	1·7	1·7	3·9	3·9
1973	1·5	1·4	3·9	4·4
1974	1·1	1·1	3·7	4·5
1975	0·9	0·9	3·5	4·8
1976	0·9	0·9	3·4	4·9

Year of conception	All legitimate maternities*	Legitimate maternities conceived outside marriage	Illegitimate maternities	Conceptions leading to abortion under 1967 Act
1977	0·8	0·8	3·4	4·8
1978	0·8	0·8	3·6	4·7
1979	0·7	0·6	3·4	5·0
1980	0·6	0·5	3·4	4·6
1981	0·5	0·4	3·2	4·9
1982	0·4	0·4	3·5	5·1
	Rates per 1,000 women aged 13 to 15			
1969	1·6	1·6	3·5	1·7
1970	1·7	1·7	3·7	2·5
1971	1·7	1·6	3·9	3·2
1972	1·7	1·6	3·8	3·8
1973	1·4	1·3	3·7	4·1
1974	1·0	1·0	3·4	4·1
1975	0·8	0·8	3·1	4·2
1976	0·8	0·8	2·9	4·2
1977	0·7	0·6	2·9	4·0
1978	0·7	0·7	3·0	3·9
1979	0·5	0·5	2·8	4·2
1980	0·5	0·4	2·8	3·9
1981	0·4	0·4	2·7	4·1
1982	0·3	0·3	3·0	4·4

Under 20 at conception

Year of conception	All legitimate maternities*	Legitimate maternities conceived outside marriage	Illegitimate maternities	Conceptions leading to abortion under 1967 Act
	Numbers ('000s)			
1969	86·9	43·5	25·3	11·2
1970	90·4	43·9	26·1	17·8
1971	83·7	39·9	25·7	23·3
1972	77·9	35·7	24·8	27·7
1973	71·9	31·7	24·7	28·9
1974	64·3	27·5	24·1	29·6
1975	58·5	23·8	23·7	29·7
1976	52·5	21·1	23·3	29·7
1977	51·8	21·0	25·2	30·4
1978	53·6	22·4	28·2	32·8
1979	53·8	22·7	30·5	36·7
1980	48·6	20·1	32·2	36·4
1981	44·4	17·7	34·0	36·7
1982	39·6	16·4	37·3	36·9
	Rates per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19			
1969	52·8	26·4	15·4	6·8
1970	55·4	26·9	16·0	10·9
1971	51·3	24·4	15·8	14·3
1972	47·3	21·7	15·1	16·8
1973	43·1	19·0	14·8	17·3
1974	37·9	16·2	14·2	17·5
1975	33·5	13·7	13·6	17·0
1976	29·2	11·8	13·0	16·5
1977	27·9	11·3	13·6	16·4
1978	28·2	11·8	14·8	17·2
1979	27·5	11·6	15·6	18·8
1980	24·4	10·1	16·1	18·2
1981	22·0	8·8	16·9	18·2
1982	19·6	8·1	18·5	18·3

* All legitimate maternities conceived either inside or outside marriage.

Pre-School Playgroups Association

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the level of the grant made to the Pre-School Playgroups Association in 1984-85.

Mr. John Patten: We have decided to make a supplementary grant of £30,000 to the Pre-School Playgroups (PPA) this financial year to help ease the cash flow problem the association anticipates in mid-March. It should also, on our present information, enable the association to balance its income and expenditure account this financial year.

I want to take this opportunity to clarify certain aspects of the events of the financial year about to end. On 25 June 1984 I announced a grant of £361,000 for 1984-85. At the same time I offered—and PPA accepted—the help of a DHSS audit team to advise on financial management and to carry out a general financial appraisal.

On 25 June PPA sent a letter to the Department to say it had dismissed its finance officer (accounts) for misconduct and had called in its auditors. Charges have since brought against the finance officer.

The DHSS financial appraisal was carried out with the full co-operation of the volunteer officers and the staff of the association. The appraisal team's report, which PPA welcomed, made a number of recommendations to strengthen and extend financial management and control. PPA accepted the recommendations in full and is working towards their implementation.

I have also seconded, at no cost to the PPA, part-time, a DHSS officer at principal grade to help it to review its management needs. I hope that these measures will enable the association to set its affairs in order and continue to provide the support to the playgroup movement which we value highly.

It is clear from preliminary discussions with the association about its grant application for 1985-86 that this will be a difficult financial year. I am confident that it will be supported by its membership.

Social Security Commissioners

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of appeal applications which have been submitted to social security commissioners in each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of appeals and applications for leave to appeal in each year since 1979 are as follows:

	Number
1979	2,712
1980	2,428
1981	3,321
1982	3,173
1983	3,141
1984	3,220

The figures have hitherto not been collected separately. Arrangements will be made for this to be done with effect from 1 January 1985.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 7**

SESSION 1984-85

25th February—8th March 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speakers rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading 'Speaker'.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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